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A FALLEN STAR

THE ADVENTURES OF A BIRDMAN

BY MASON RAY.

TED HAMILTON.

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THERE," said I tossing overboard the last can of our discriminatingly selected provender, "early risers will gather up a new brand of manna—tinned manna labeled in a Chicago packing house. Now we've lightened our weight to the last ounce."

"There's the dog," mildly suggested Professor Wakeman as he near-sightedly peered about the gloom interior of our air-shaft. "If you consider his heft——"

"Pitch Whisk overboard? Never!" said I. "It was sure a luny thought—fetching along the terrier. But he was set on coming, poor little devil, and I hadn't the heart to refuse. And now that he's here he must share our fortunes—fair or foul."

Once more I leaned over the rail watching the relentless upfloating of a large city. Above us, brilliantly jeweled but dusky with night, spread wide a scintillant dome; beneath sparkled the nether heavens of far-reaching, electric-lighted thoroughfares that seemed to sweep toward us. Frantically I had warded off the uprising earth by jettisoning every article of weight. As I gazed at the unknown city drawing us to its center as a magnet attracts steel I fluently swore at deserting fortune. For over a thousand miles my own contrivance in a lighter-than-air craft had proceeded with friendly atmospheric currents. The prize offered for an endurance test seemed almost won. Exultantly I explained to the middle-aged scientist who accompanied me my reasons for this and that departure from the usual building of a dirigible. I had perfected a thing of dreams, yet my invention held a flaw. We were at the mercy of the natural law discovered by his nibs, Sir Isaac Newton. Despite Professor Wakeman's defense of that astute gentleman I loaded his honored name with reproaches. The glittering metropolis with miles of beaded lights now swung so near that we could descry pigmies traversing the pavements and cabs, like fat beetles, hastening to and fro.

"Is it not best," devoutly suggested the scientist, "that we prepare for dissolution? The coming impact——"

"Will merely knock the breath out of you temporarily," I assured him. "Our one danger is in being lassoed aloft on a smokestack or church spire by means of the dragging equilibrator. Otherwise we're safe."

Within five minutes we settled below that danger line. Then a dark area gently swam upward until our craft joined it with momentary glide, an indefinite wabble and a final sickening heave.

"Here we are," I announced. "This seems to be the flat section of the slated roof of a residence. Grip Whisk's collar while I explore."

Protesting yelps and a lively skirmish informed me that the professor followed instructions while I secured my electric torch and vaulted over the side. Immediately I discovered two items essential to our own and the balloon's safety—a chimney stack and a skylight. About the former I twisted a detaining rope in case sufficient gas remained in the silk to bowl the car over the eaves; the latter I pried open by breaking a pane of glass and inserting my arm.

"You'd best remain in charge of Whisk while I secure help to move the car," I told my companion. "Afterward we'll hunt up suitable lodging."

"Be careful," warned the scientist. "The good people below may misjudge your motives. Exercise due caution."

I agreed to adopt the tactics of a crack yeggsman while I inserted my legs through a limited opening and commenced the descent of a short stair revealed by my light. At the foot of shallow steps I found myself in a huge dust-draped attic. The only downward egress proved to be a trap-door. By violently wrenching upward on an iron ring imbedded in its edge I broke its fastening and jerked it open with such abruptness that I fell backward. The very building seemed to tremble. Altogether the racket would have shamed an amateur. I fully expected the gaping void would reveal an armed household but my torch showed nothing more alarming than a second flight of steps leading to a dark corridor.

"Surely," I ruminated, "the perils of a housebreaker are vastly overestimated."

Being innocent of evil intent I determined to walk boldly, to strike an attitude of nothing-to-fear, and disarm suspicion by my manly bearing. This policy outlasted that corridor and one stairway. Then unconsciously I began to crouch, peer, listen and crawl. Every turn seemed peopled with Argus-eyed creatures who watched my cautious movements. Momentarily I expected to feel the sting of a bullet, feel the weight of a bludgeon. In this furtive manner I traversed another corridor and passed down a carpeted stairway. Again I found a silent, deserted space door-lined and unillumined. With feline tread I crossed thick carpeting, then descended a wide, winding, ornate stairs to the first floor. My immunity from attack buoyed me with false hope. Just as I located the great hall door and drew the anticipatory breath of liberty I detected the muffled sound of voices. Their direction puzzled me. They seemed the tantalizing efforts of ventriloquism. Self-preservative instinct urged me to secrete myself until danger lessened. To force the hall door required time and would doubtless precipitate an encounter. Glancing about I noted that beneath the door at my right, leading probably to a drawingroom, there appeared a thread of light. At my left the space beneath the opposite door was dark. This indicated that my chance for temporary shelter lay back of that portal. Instantly I turned to this possible haven. With my right hand I noiselessly turned the knob and pushed the door inward; with my left I held the torch that pierced the gloom by an inquisitive finger of light. The result made me gasp. I forgot to utter the set speech I intended to hurl at the first head I encountered. For, within the limited radiance, like an image projected on a screen, I saw first the black throat of a gun then the gray-clad form of a stern-visaged, bespectacled lady. She was somewhat hatchet-faced and of the type adorned in old portraits by corkscrew curls. Even in that instant of paralyzed amazement I wondered at the absence of these hirsute appendages.

"I've got him; turn on the lights, Nina," triumphantly commanded the woman behind the gun. Then to me, "Throw up your hands."

Mechanically I obeyed. Like Bar-

tholdi's Goddess of Liberty I raised my torch heavenward and became a living statue. Above us the polished ceiling received a disk of light but darkness enveloped the actors of this unrehearsed comedy. Then a dozen bulbs glowed and I saw a spacious book-lined room decorated in sea-green tints and sumptuously furnished. But the object that riveted my gaze was the other occupant—a slim girl with hair like a raven's wing but eyes of deepest blue. Her cheeks were tear-stained, yet her arched lips seemed to resist a smile. Evidently she had just returned from either opera, theater or ball. Her lace-draped silken gown of pale blue was low cut, revealing the exquisite curve of throat and shoulder. The bared arms were suited to replace the abstracted members of the Venus de Milo. Altogether she was the most distracting winsome bit of womanhood I ever beheld.

"Bind his hands with the curtain ropes," next ordered the lady Napoleon. "Not a word!" she rasped as I attempted to speak. "And if you move I fire."

I believed her. An ominous glint in her fearless, gray eyes warned me not to expect mercy. Moreover she handled the half-cocked gun so carelessly that I longed to exchange her surveillance for that of a policeman.

"I can't, Aunt Kate," remonstrated the girl's sweet, tearful voice. "He don't look very horrid. Send him away."

"Nonsense!" scoffed her relative. "There's no danger. Do what I say and mind you twist them tight."

Thus urged the girl swiftly collected several green silk cords that held back curtains. Then, at my back, I felt a pair of soft trembling hands attempting to bind the wrists I crossed at a signal from my captor. Fumbling she laced the ropes over my arms and about each hand while her cold fingers pried, pulled and knotted. So entrancing was the operation that I regretted the finish. Finally she completed my bondage to her satisfaction and rejoined her aunt in the foreground. In one sense her task was thoroughly accomplished. From that moment I was her slave. Until then my only object of devotion had been my aerial invention. It had played me false. Hereafter my allegiance was transferred to a being of flesh and blood.

"Now," questioned the armed lady, "who are you?"

"I'm Jack Bradwald, the American aviator," I told her.

"Pooh!" she eloquently commented. "Tell the truth."

"It is the truth," I stated to her impervious front. "In proof you'll find my disabled car on your housetop. If you'll condescend to summon a servant and send him to the roof he'll tell you the balloon is there is charge of Professor Wakeman who accompanied me for the purpose of studying atmospheric phenomena. I'm no burglar."

"Why, Aunt Kate," interposed the wide-eyed niece, "if that is true this gentleman is the star birdman—last year's winner of the world's altitude record, the most daring airman of this season. Don't you remember?"

"In short he's a fallen star," her aunt ironically commented.

"My statement can be easily corroborated," I insisted. "There was some flaw that allowed a gas-escape. As a result we—the professor and I—are landed in a city of whose name we're ignorant. Our ballast, food, spare clothing, part of our instruments, in fact everything possible were thrown overboard to lighten weight. But despite every effort we involuntarily landed; and chance dropped us on your roof."

Each and every lineament of my captor's stern face denounced me as a liar. Then her thin lips voiced the sentiment.

"I don't believe a word of it," she declared. "Here, Nina," she commanded, "you aim this revolver. Don't let it or the burglar move. I'll leave you to guard him while I explode this cock-and-bull story and summon the police."

In a trice Nina's vigorous relative posed her, despite her objections, in the attitude of an armed sentry. She then annexed my torch and started for the stairs.

"Oh, don't Aunt Kate; don't go!" protested her niece in a panic of fear or embarrassment; I could not decide which. "Don't leave me like this. Please——"

But Aunt Kate's nimble feet were sounding a rapid retreat while my unwilling guard and I, the bound captive, stood regarding each other—she half-abashed from beneath lowered lashes and I with an air of abject agony.

"Your gaunt will speedily verify my assertions," I assured her with repentant, pardon-beseeching eyes fixed on her tear-stained cheeks. "In a few minutes she'll know that I'm not a yeggman. There was no secretiveness about my entrance. Goodness knows I made noise enough to wake the dead."

Miss Nina bit her pretty lips for the purpose, I am certain, of stifling laughter. Between this tendency and the tear signs there was a discrepancy difficult to fathom.

"At least," said she, managing to steady her voice—and I no longer pronounced it tearful—"you failed to arouse the servants."

By this time her slender fingers allowed the heavy firearm to sag until nothing but my feet presented a mark. Tactfully I reminded her of this laxness whereupon she elevated the weapon with a quick glance at me to note if my object were ridicule. At this angle a plaster bust of Mars, the god of war, was in direct line. It occupied a niche above my two yards and something of person, and being doubtless valuable, I trembled for its safety.

"I'm exceeding sorry that I caused you annoyance," I told her contritely still noting the tear signs. "You must have been dreadfully startled, altogether upset."

"Not in the least," she stated with emphasis. Reading my unspoken thought she continued, "if you imagine I wept for fright you're badly mistaken." She paused an appreciable moment, as if hesitating, then added: "The fact is Aunt Kate was scolding and I welcomed your arrival. You see," she explained, "the capture of a—a burglar was diverting. It stopped the nagging."

"Your aunt seems a very courageous woman," I remarked uncertain what rejoinder to make.

"Auntie's a regular Joan of Arc," declared the niece. "But, as for me, I'm ordinarily a perfect little coward. I dare say if you weren't bound and if I wasn't armed I'd——"

Her sentence ended in a shriek. The revolver clattered to the floor and a small shaggy body hurled itself upon my supposed enemy.

"Don't mind him; it's Whisk, my terrier," I cried, slipping my hands from the ill-tied bonds and snatching up the tiny defender. "I'm frightfully mortified at his behavior," I assured her, "but I left him in charge of the professor. He must have broken away."

My astonished guard stared at my unfettered hands as if she viewed the trick of a charlatan, at the effusive rat-and-tan licking my face in joyous paroxysm, then her gaze sought the abandoned weapon at her feet.

"That," said she, "is as I suspected, a superfluous article. Your dog confirms my opinion. No sane porch climber would bring along anything so alarming."

"Not," said I, "since the untimely end of Bill Sykes."

"But," she demanded, "if your friend and car are on the roof, why isn't Aunt Kate back?"

That was a poser. Certainly the Amazonic lady was unduly prolonging her absence. My guard's blue eyes darkened with sudden alarm.

"Perhaps she has stumbled and fallen," suggested her niece. "The dog might have rushed at her and she hates dogs. Hadn't we better go up and see?"

Whereupon, armed with candles, we filed through the corridors and up the stairs, with Whisk in the advance. Miss Barrett, as named to me by her niece, had snapped on lights in the two long halls, but the last passageway and attic were in darkness. At the narrow stair leading to the loft I turned to assist my companion. Unhesitatingly she gave me her hand. This proof of her confidence was repeated at the final egress and we stood together under the midnight sky.

A brisk October wind fanned our cheeks, extinguished our lights and fluttered the girl's trailing robes like an unfurled banner. By starlight I eagerly scanned the spot where I had left Professor Wakeman and the balloon. Nothing suggestive of their presence remained excepting the rope I had looped about the chimney. The scientist, Aunt Kate and the car had vanished! Astounded, the bereft niece and I faced each other in the half light. I could see that her features were convulsed and that her lips were again bitten as if to suppress a cry.

"This is very unfortunate," I admitted in an agony of self-reproach. "Your aunt must have been investigating the interior of the car—must have, for some reason, entered it, just as the wind broke the rope. But there's no occasion for alarm. The region they'll cover is prairie and the gas can't carry far. Before long they'll land like the blowing of a thistledown."

Still the girl was silent; then her hands went to her face and, astonished, I heard the sound of laughter—bubbling, giggling, uncontrollable laughter—that shook her form and ended in an open silvery peal.

"What—will—you—think of me?" she ejaculated between bursts of untimely merriment. "But—it does—seem extraordinarily funny—for Aunt Kate—to fly off in this manner—like—a witch—and in the company of a strange gentleman. It's shockingly unconventional!"

"At least," said I, examining the unlucky rope that had evidently been insecurely tied to the car, "she'll command the situation. Wakeman's helpless as a child. He knows nothing outside of books and fears a woman beyond anything living or dead."

My assurance seemed to conjure up fresh images that further upset my companion's gravity. Not until we were back in the library was she sufficiently composed to discuss plans for rescue.

"This gale will drive them somewhere over Nebraska," I hazarded. "The balloon, being lightened by the considerable difference between my own and your aunt's weight besides Whisk's fifteen pounds, may float indefinitely in this breeze—possibly a hundred miles. Their course will be direct, since they lack sufficient buoyancy to lift them into adverse air-currents. At dawn we can telegraph to all points in the probable flight and secure evidence of their location from villages that observe them pass, then follow by train. At present you had best wake your somniferous servants and let them care for you while I rest, until daybreak, at some near hotel."

"Not for worlds," objected the niece of the flying Miss Barrett. "Aunt wouldn't have the servants know of this for a king's ransom. And above all things the night's mishap must be kept from the press. I know Aunt Kate often stays awake thinking up plans to keep her movements from reporters. If you wish to make amends for unwittingly causing her this embarrassment, help me to manage her return without publicity; help me to be on the spot with suitable clothing and funds the moment she lands."

In compliance with part of this request the name of the city in which I found myself and the hotel where I snatched brief, sorely needed rest is suppressed. A night clerk received me at first with suspicion, but, being an enthusiastic follower of sporting events, I was speedily able to convince him of my identity. After which he freely gave me essential advice and information regarding railroad time tables and the topographical character of the region. Incidentally I managed to learn something concerning my involuntary hostess without revealing the reason of my interest.

Miss Katharine Barrett, it appeared, ranked tenth among the wealthy women of America. Her great riches were inherited, but she managed to conserve and even increase the amount by astonishing business ability. Far and near she was known as an eccentric; her unmarried state resulted from a morbid horror that men wooed her millions rather than herself, which was the truth. Her adopted heiress, Miss Nina Barrett, was the only child of a deceased brother. Report claimed that the girl was being forced into a distasteful marriage. The ambitious aunt desired to add luster to the Barrett wealth by annexing a title for her ward. Therefore Baron Von Klaasen, who chanced to stop in the city while investigating a mining claim, was elevated to the seventh degree of the spinster's favor and entered heart and soul into the matrimonial project. Between the two—report declared—the helpless niece was being relentlessly drawn into the net. Rebellion at the fate designed for her by the masterful aunt was to be punished by disinheritance.

Long after I should have slept my heart burned with jealousy and my brain throbbed with plans for the deliverance of the niece rather than her relative. At an unearthly hour I ordered coffee and studied local railroads. To my dismay the charts showed that the balloon's undoubted flight covered a country unpierced by traffic. An auto trip presented the only solution and, since I understood driving, I secured a powerful car and had it supplied with sufficient "gas" for an extended run.

At the Barrett mansion Miss Nina personally received me and conducted me to the room into which I had blundered the preceding night. Whisk, at my heels, greeted her most amiably. He's a discerning imp and a dull wit would have rendered homage to the distractingly pretty woman, garbed in a trim traveling suit of dark blue, and sparklingly fresh despite the abbreviated night and early rising.

"I've given the servants to understand that their mistress was abruptly summoned on urgent business and that I'm to join her," the niece demurely informed me. Her face was decorously grave but in the depths of her dark blue eyes was a hint of laughter. The girl's compelling sense of humor oddly spiced a nature that I later found to be pathetically dependent and childlike.

"Since no railroad is obliging enough to parallel last night's gale," I informed her, "I'm obliged to pursue the balloon in a motor. Possibly this plan may——"

"There's no alternative," she broke in, reading my thoughts. "Don't you see I must provide Aunt Kate with necessaries at once? After all the auto is better than facing crowded trains. We can add her motor coat, veil and mask to what I've packed. That will form a perfect disguise. Not a soul need be the wiser. And oh, do hasten!"

Evidently Nina, as I named her in my thoughts, was possessed by one idea—the salvation of her aunt's dignity. The thought of having my divinity at my side during a day's autoing was little short of bliss. We both were oblivious of offending social custom. It seemed fittingly proper that we should together seek the involuntary aeronauts. A few minutes later we were off in the big chocolate-colored car I had hired. For a time our pace was restricted by city ordinance. At legal speed we rolled past block after block where lone patrolmen guarded a sleeping city then into a business quarter and finally into the open country. Immediately I spurted forward with the indicator at third speed. Wide, level, deserted roads invited. Zipping air set our pulses at high C. The sky whitened for dawn then high-floating clouds took fire; the east became rose-hued, deepened to flame, became a mighty conflagration that reached the zenith. Then the sun crept above the horizon until it swung in the heavens like a huge toy balloon, blood-red, bleaching the sky back to azure. Nina, at my side, with sweet curving mouth showing below the hideous goggles gripped the seat, but her poise and the scarlet in her cheeks betrayed her absorption in our flight. We breakfasted at a village inn while I sent out telegraphic inquiries. Nothing resulted. As yet the flight of the air-craft had not been noted. In the rich autumn sunshine we shot ahead to the next village where I repeated the telegrams. Still the answers declared that no balloon had passed. At mid-forenoon this maddening uncertainty was relieved by one exception. A hamlet to the right of our course reported the astonishing sight of a low-flying airship. I was now aware that the skittish runaway had cut us out a stern chase. They had changed direction and passed this point at seven o'clock. I likewise veered and sought the spot. Again I sent forth messages and learned that the balloon had appeared far ahead toward our left. Withing the hour balloons were sighted at every quarter of the firmament. The air was filled, by lively imaginations, with every variety of flying craft. Until late that evening we were enticed onward by this balloonic will-o'-the-wisp. Then I found hotel accommodation for Nina, but spent my night in the car. This was my concession to outraged proprieties.

At dawn we resumed the intimate companionship of our strange mission. As before we were lured onward by the chimera of fancied gas-bags with dependent cars. All day we fled onward in the track of that long-ago gale. Twilight found us in the heart of a wild, sparsely settled country. Its barrenness smote us with a sense of our failure and I cursed my optimistic stupidity in permitting Nina to accompany me on that wild wild chase. The descending curtain of night adversely revealed to the full the equivocal position in which my loved one was placed. At a brookside Nina bathed her dust-grimed face and hands, while I repaired one of the trifling breaks that interspersed our journey. For a moment before starting we stood watching the fading sunset; then our eyes met and I read the growing dismay, almost terror, that possessed her.

"See here, Nina," I began, with reserve cast to the winds, "people age by experience not time. During the long hours of this amazing ride we've become better acquainted—nearer—than usually happens in months of cut-and-dried formality. You know perfectly well that I'm madly in love with you; and if I dare hope that you will consent to forfeit your inheritance—you see I know all about it—and will trust yourself to my keeping, we'll convert this trip into an unpremeditated elopement and cheat the gossips."

"The gossips?" she cried. "I care nothing for the gossips; it's Aunt Kate I fear."

Then she looked at me half understanding until my full meaning sank into her weary brain. Instantly her sweet face rivaled the western sky; the long lashes drooped over the ultramarine of her pure eyes, her hands locked and interlocked in pitiful confusion.

"Unusual situations demand rare measures," I urged. "Take the refuge of my name—the press has told it's honest—and afterward, if you wish, I'll arrange for your release. I meant to win you by a conventional courtship; this precipitancy may ruin my meager chance, but, God knows, your happiness counts first."

For what seemed an age she neither moved or spoke. Then slowly the dark lashes lifted revealing a radiance of love-light. The ungloved fingers were placed in my extended, pleading palms.

"You're not the only one," whispered adorable lips, "that was true at first sight. I've known—since—the beginning—that there need not be—any—later arrangement—for my happiness."

At the hostelry of a picturesque hamlet I left Nina and Whisk in a small parlor while I secured the license and minister essential to our design in plaguing Madam Grundy. The long-coated, kindly divine who undertook the mission attempted to discourse of similar occasions—notably one that morning—in which his services were requisitioned.

"They were an elderly couple," he narrated; "the groom seemed of an absent-minded turn. I noticed that the lady attended to everything quite ship-shape and that she wore no hat. No doubt the wife will steer that matrimonial barque but they both appeared exceedingly happy. Sunset marriages often turn out wonderfully well; but I can't imagine why it was necessary for people of that mature age to elope."

For me his senile runaways lacked interest and I impatiently hastened his steps. In the pretty, kerosene-illumined inn parlor Miss Nina came forward to meet us and trustfully assumed the indicated place by my side.

"We must have two witnesses," Rev. Holcomb reminded me. "As the couple I mentioned are still here I'll ask them to act. Poetic justice would suggest that one eloping couple should stand sponsor for another."

At this he stepped from the room, but almost immediately returned and in his clerical wake marched—Professor Wakeman and Aunt Kate!

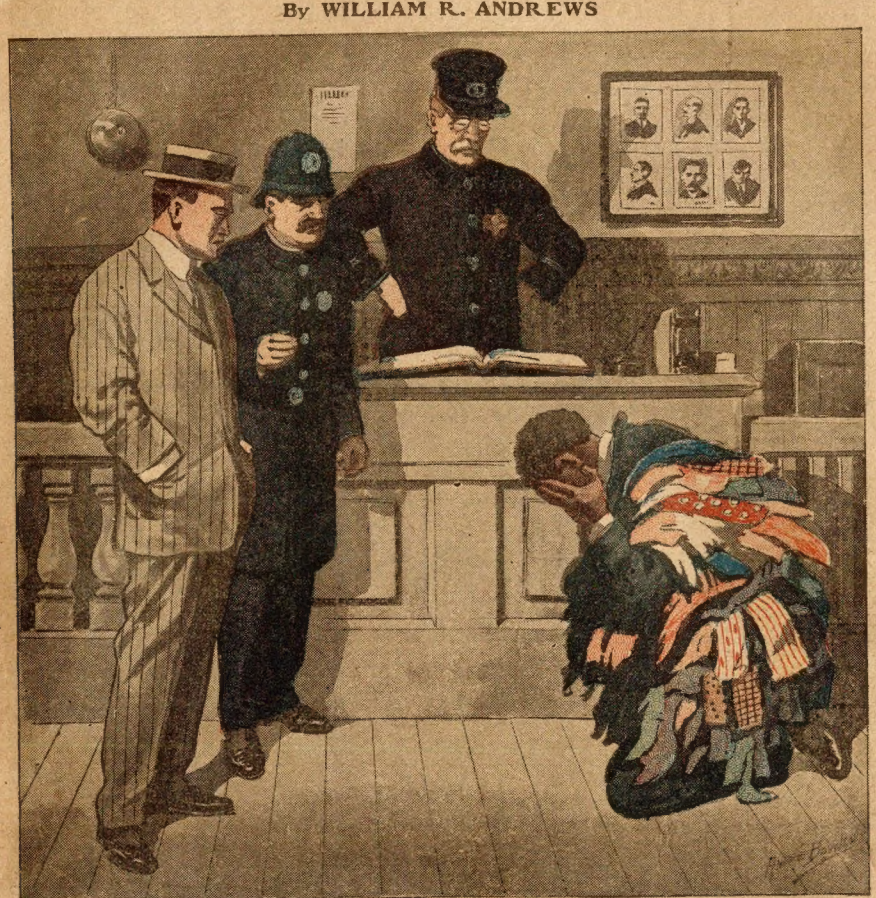
The former met my questioning gaze

(Continued on page eight.)

THE FRANKLIN MYSTERY;

Or, THE RECOVERY OF THE JEWELS

By WILLIAM R. ANDREWS



"What is that bundle of rags?"

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CHAPTER XII.

IN THE FACTORY.

TOM unmindful of the delay in Frank's capture, hurried to police headquarters and stated the case before the chief, who on hearing what was wanted placed at the detective's disposal six plainclothes men to accompany him to the tenement house, to guard the exits of the structure while he went to Sally Marble's room and made the arrest.

But right after his departure from her flat, the negro Frank put in an appearance. Sally apprised him of the strange caller and Tom's final remark concerning the jewelry. Frank showed signs of uneasiness on hearing this, and questioned Sally as to the looks of the unknown visitor and everything else he had to say.

The negro sat and pondered over the situation, in doubt whether to take flight at vague alarms caused by Sally's information or push aside all anxious thoughts as due to a troubled conscience. He was about to dismiss the subject and talk over the plans he and his fiancee had for their coming marriage but for a casual remark of the young woman at this point.

"He certainly was a nice young man," declared Sally, "but there seemed to be something peculiar about his looks which Ah don't understand."

"What's that?" asked Frank. "Jist like any other nigger, want he?"

"No, he want," responded Sally. "Before he went out of de door, he put he's hand to he's face, and drawed it way, leaving a light streak. Of course he might hab been a yaller coon what shovels coal and didn't wash his face."

This intelligence electrified Frank. "I sees it now; that man is a detective, one of dem bulls what disguises himself into anything they wants to be. Guess Ah got to get out of here, Sally."

"Why, you ain't afraid of dem bulls," replied Sally in surprise. "Yuh ain't done nothing to bring dem after you, has yuh?"

Frank's face took on a deadly pallor as he glanced at the door and the window, sizing up the means of a quick escape, if he had to get out in a hurry. But he didn't admit to Sally that there was any reason for his being wanted by the detectives.

"No, Ah didn't done nothing, but perhaps dey is mistaking me for somebody what looks like me," he said rapidly. "Yuh know Ah wouldn't stand no chance. Ah's going to git right away from here till dey leaves."

Not waiting for Sally to say anything, he darted into his own room across the hall from hers, and shut the door. Remaining inside long enough to take off the fine clothes he had bought with the money raised on the pawned jewelry, the negro appeared dressed in the torn and worn out outfit of a roustabout.

Explaining briefly what he intended to do Frank took all the jewelry and thrust it in his pocket.

"Got to hide dis, Sally," he said. "If dey finds it dem bulls will make trouble for us both. Ah am going now, and ain't got time to hid dem glad rags of mine. Put dem out of the way, so the bulls won't find them."

By the time he had given these parting instructions he was half way down the stairs. A moment later he bounded out of the back door, leading into a dark alley in the rear of the house. He threaded his way through this with as much ease as if it had been brilliantly lighted, he was so familiar with the locality.

At the west end it came to an abrupt termination, a high board fence, blocking further progress. That is, it would have stopped the average-sized person. But the negro was large and agile, and he knew just where there were holes for him to insert his toes in making its ascent.

Over this he climbed in a few seconds and then dropped into the yard of another tenement. Passing through the hall of this structure, which was half a block away from the one he just left, Frank walked into the street.

Just as he turned the corner he looked back at the entrance of the building where Sally Marble was domiciled. Unfortunately for him, he stood under a lamppost while surveying the other end of the thoroughfare, and his figure was plainly visible to a group of persons in front of the building he had left so precipitately.

If he had been particular to keep in the shadows, the negro could have walked away without attracting attention. Some of the people shouted at the sight of his tall, ragged form.

"There he is," a person in the crowd shouted.

It was Tom's voice. The detective recognized Frank, as his height tallied with the description he had received from Dr. Franklin. If the negro had been a man of average build he might have escaped unobserved, so different did he look from the spick-and-span dandy he appeared to be before changing his showy habiliments for the humble attire of a hard-working roustabout.

The cry went up again.

"There he is; that's the fellow," yelled Sparks. "After him—I'm sure he's our man."

The crowd broke up, the plainclothes men started on a dead run in pursuit of the negro.

As Tom was a swift runner, he was soon in the lead. The other men, however, were close at his heels.

The negro, frightened out of his wits, dashed down the street. He thought of going back into the tenement, and trying to elude his pursuers by hiding in some dark nook, which generally afforded quick concealment to those familiar with the ins and outs of the locality. But the men behind him were too close for him to avail himself of such a refuge. The only hope was to outdistance them all, before diving into any likely doorway. The moment it was seen where he disappeared, the house would be surrounded, and all escape cut off at once.

On he sped, but gradually Tom gained on him. It looked as though it were all up with the negro. In despair he scanned the buildings ahead of him, hoping that some means would come to hand which would enable him to yet elude the crowd of eager police fast overtaking him. He darted up first one street and then down another.

It was not long before he was out of the negro quarter, and his heart sank with despair as he realized how much more difficult it would be to give them the slip in a strange part of the town, where they were probably more familiar with the peculiarities of the streets than he could ever hope to be.

At last he came opposite a high board fence before a building having the appearance of a factory. Fire-escapes projected from under the windows on each floor, and a ladder hung down from the roof to the top story. The ladder on the first floor reached down almost to the ground in the factory yard.

Realizing that running a half block farther would compel him to slacken his pace, and probably bring the chase to an end, he scaled the fence and went hand over hand up the fire-ladder.

It was his first intention to go to the roof and run across the housetops, trusting to luck in finding an open scuttle through which he could descend, or a fire-escape like this one, on another building.

But his pursuers were by this time so close he dared not take chances of finding such a likely means of throwing them off his track. The only thing left to do was to go through the open window. It was not locked, and he pushed his way in. Turning quickly he drew together the two iron shutters which had been carelessly left open by the watchman.

Just as he shot the bolt inside, Sparks reached the fire-escape. But he was too late to prevent the closing of the iron doors.

"Well, here's a fine go," he exclaimed, as the man behind came up. "Quick, we must surround the building and see that he does not get away from the door below."

The six men placed themselves in positions to watch all exits, while Tom remained on the fire-escape and tried to open the iron door. It was quite out of the question, though, for it was securely bolted on the inside.

So he did not waste any more time, but descended to the ground and rang the watchman's bell at the entrance of the factory. In a few moments the watchman opened the door, to see who was bent on disturbing the peace and quiet of the still building after working hours.

"There's a vicious character, a negro, who just climbed in through an open window above, and is hiding," explained Tom. "Hurry, let us in."

The watchman hesitated as if he was not sure of Spark's intentions.

Divining his thoughts, Tom threw back his coat and exposed his shield. It was like a talisman, capable of opening all the difficult places of the world.

"Tom Sparks, the great detective," gasped the watchman, in admiring accents. "Sure, Mr. Sparks, come right in, and whatever you want me to do, depend upon me to be right on the spot."

Tom thanked the man, and though appreciating the compliment as expressed in his impulsive admiration, he hurried past to avoid any further conversation, for time was precious at such a critical moment.

Up the stairs Tom and one of the men he had beckoned to follow, rushed with leaps and bounds, the watchman coming after to render any assistance he might be able to give when needed. And he was needed, for Tom called back over his shoulder and asked him to turn on the switch controlling the lighting system on each floor.

The next moment every floor was flooded with a brilliancy that penetrated every nook and corner of the place. It proved to be a large cloak and suit house. Sewing machines were ranged along the walls near the windows, and the center of the floors was taken up with cutters' tables, stacks of garments and cloth still to be made into women's and children's costumes.

It was no trouble to search the place because of the lack of dark corners or other places affording means of concealment. The tables stood on high legs and it was easy to see whether a person were under one of them, while the sewing machines afforded no shield from the eyes of the searchers.

Only a few minutes were necessary for Tom and the others to see that all the floors were deserted, and they left the building. When they got outside Tom said: "Well, it looks as though he got away after all. How he did it with the rest of you men surrounding the place I can't understand."

"Must have taken an aeroplane," grunted one of the plainclothes men. "He couldn't have got by so many of us. We watched very closely all the doors and the windows, front and back."

CHAPTER XIII.

A BUNDLE OF RAGS.

It certainly looked as though the negro had eluded his pursuers. But how? That was the question. Could he still be in the building? That seemed quite im-

possible, considering the careful search that had been made on every floor. Tom saw that there was no use of keeping the police officers any longer, and thanking them for their assistance, he told them to go back to the station house and arrest Sally Marble on the way.

He, however, intended to remain and after their departure, retreated to the shadow of a tree on the other side of the street.

"I will watch the building for a while," he muttered. "That negro is inside, I am sure. He could not have got away without being seen when there were so many on watch."

All the fire-escapes were on his side of the building, and he knew that the man could not escape from the other side because of the watchman, who would immediately raise an alarm if the fellow should appear. Tom had spoken to the watchman before taking his station in the shadow of the tree, and apprised him of his suspicions.

I have a hunch that he must be around yet. So if you will keep your weather eye open it will help satisfy me as to whether he has proved too slick for us."

"All right," replied the watchman, who felt flattered to have such a noted thief catcher as Tom Sparks take him into his confidence and ask his assistance.

So with one person watching the other side of the factory, ready to give instant alarm, and himself keeping his eyes on the fire-escapes, Tom felt that it would not be long before he got his hands on the slippery culprit. Patiently the detective waited for signs of the negro. An hour passed and everything was still about the block, no pedestrian disturbing the peace of the locality at that hour. Already the lights in the factory had been put out again. Still another hour passed and there was no indication of anybody being in the building but the watchman. Tom nevertheless was satisfied of the negro's waiting to slip out when he thought it perfectly safe.

Just as the detective felt that perhaps after all he had been mistaken in supposing that Frank had not left the building, he noticed something at the second story that set his senses all agog. Through the gloom of a cloudy night he was able to detect the movements of some one on the fire-escape. He expected to see the negro step on the ladder and cautiously descend to the floor below. Instead Sparks saw, as well as he was able to make out, a huge bundle being gradually let through the square opening of the iron fire-escape where the ladder connected with the one on the next floor. In the distance the object looked like a bundle of rags. Slowly it descended, and the detective thought it was being lowered by a rope.

"Well, this is a nervy piece of work," exclaimed Tom. "Here the coon must know that he is in danger of attracting the attention of somebody, and yet before making his escape he has tied up a bundle of loot, and is lowering it to the ground to take away with him."

The bundle kept coming down slowly, and as it got closer to the radius of the street lamps Tom saw that it appeared to consist of rags.

"That certainly gets me," he exclaimed. "To think of the fellow stealing odds and ends of waste material left over from the garments cut out from the piles of cloth I saw on the floor. Now if he had rolled up a lot of finished cloaks and suits he could pawn I'd see the sense of what he is doing. Well, anyway, the rag man who collects here every morning will have one bundle less to take away.

And he laughed softly to himself to think of the negro's stealing the least valuable things in the factory, after he had shown his appreciation of expensive jewelry. And yet it did not seem reasonable to suppose that the negro was carrying off just rags. Tom looked again to try to discover whether his suppositions were right. Yes, they were rags, all right; he could see the small strips of cloth sticking out of the ends and the sides.

But the size of the bundle next attracted his attention. It was about as long as a man, and bigger round in the middle. The revelation puzzled the detective, and he began to rub his eyes to make sure he was seeing things straight. Yes, there was the bundle all right, and just as big as he thought it to be on first discovering its huge dimensions. Having determined that he was right, he waited to see the bundle touch the ground, and the negro jump the fence with it before he left his hiding place.

While he kept his eye glued to the object exposed in the dim light of the flickering street lamps he noticed that the bundle suddenly stopped in its downward movements, and was allowed to rest on the fire-escape for a few moments.

"The coon's arm must have got tired," he muttered to himself.

Then Tom looked again at the bundle. He was trying to see the rope by which it was being lowered.

"Must be a small one," he thought. "Can't see it at all; yet it needs a strong rope for the weight of a bundle that size."

The collection of rags now seemed to act queerr. With its sudden suspension in the air it seemed to have fallen against the iron railing with the slacking of the rope, and was leaning upright. A bundle of rags six feet long and propped on end was a sight that never before in his vast experience had Tom Sparks seen anywhere. Then it moved slowly back and forth, as if the person lowering it were jerking the rope. But perhaps this was done to bring it directly over the opening of the fire-escape, for its next descent. Finally it went through the square hole and moved slowly down the rungs of the iron ladder.

It had seemed at first to Tom that the man was exercising too much caution, for it could have been thrown to the ground without making any noise. Why didn't the negro do what other people would do under the circumstances? Everything taken into consideration, his procedure seemed unusual, and Tom began to suspect something else. This, however, did not make it necessary for him to change his plan of waiting for the negro to come over the fence before attempting to make an arrest.

The detective did not have long to wait. The bundle dropped out of sight on the other side of the fence, and a moment later the man appeared scrambling over its top.

But what a transformation in the appearance of the negro. He was the bundle of rags! At sight of him Tom recollected having seen several bundles about the same size, and realized that the negro had disguised himself as one, hoping to get down the fire-escape without exciting suspicion by making it seem to any one who might be passing at the time that some person in the building was lowering a "bundle" to the ground.

The detective held himself in readiness to rush out from the shadow of the tree and grab the fellow the moment his feet touched the sidewalk. He did not have to wait long, for presently the negro scaled the fence at a point directly opposite the detective's hiding place and jumped down lightly, landing on the stone flagging without making any noise. As he stood a second in the glare of the street lamp, a strange spectacle was revealed to Sparks. Over the head of the negro was a burlap bag, his feet were encased in other bags of the same material, while his arms and body were covered with yards and yards of small strips of cloth, wound round and round with pieces of twine he had found in the factory.

Only for a second did the negro stand in the light of the lamp, when realizing that he was exposing himself to the view of anybody passing at the other end of the block, he made a quick dive for the shadows of the trees on the same side where the detective was waiting to reach out and grab him. Tom made a rush for the fellow, and threw himself upon the negro so quickly that he was completely taken by surprise. He struggled hard with his captor, and being a strong man put up a stiff fight with the detective, but Tom showed no weakling and soon had the fellow down on the sidewalk, turned over on his back. But just as he was about to slip a pair of handcuffs over the fellow's wrists the negro made a quick movement and struggled halfway to his feet. In doing so he reached to his hip pocket, but this suspicious action only brought quick reprisals on his head, literally and figuratively. For Tom lifted his hand holding the iron bracelets high in the air and brought them down on the top of the negro's kinky dome with force enough to put a white man out of business.

Of course Sparks did not intend to go to extremes, and would have put less power into his arm if dealing with a white man whose skull is not so thick as that of a negroe. Desperate cases require desperate remedies, and Tom exercised as much energy as was necessary to daze the fellow until he slipped on the handcuffs. He soon came to, but all the fight was taken out of him. So he gave expression to his feelings by calling the detective a few names.

"Stop that!" ordered Tom, and as he dragged the man to his feet and turned his face in the direction of the police station. "You're caught, and that's all there is about it. You're case won't be helped by swearing at me."

"What yuh goin' to take me to the cooler for?" asked the negro sullenly. "Ah ain't done nothing."

"Oh, yes, you have," responded Tom. "How about the jewelry you stole in Brooklyn—and the woman you murdered?"

"Murdered?" cried the negro in surprised tones. And his face turned sickly green under the light of the lampost, while his knees trembled with fear. "Boss Ah ain't killed no one."

"How about Mrs. Franklin, the wife of your old employer, when you took her jewelry?" asked Tom severely.

The negro looked at the detective with an expression of fearful amazement seemingly genuine.

"You are pretty good at looking innocent," sneered Tom. "But you murdered her. Now own up, didn't you put the strangle hold on her because she woke up and caught you in the act of robbing her bureau?"

"Deed Ah didn't, boss, do no such thing," protested the negro.

"But you stole the jewelry, didn't you?" insisted the detective.

"Ah ain't done nuffin," continued the negro doggedly. "Never was in no Brooklyn in my life."

"Oh, come now, it won't do for you to make such a denial," declared Tom. "Plenty of witnesses are ready to identify you the moment we set foot in Brooklyn again."

Though he realized the absurdity of making such a sweeping denial in face of the certainty of being identified by Dr. Franklin and others in the neighborhood of the physician's house the moment he was taken to New York, the negro continued to protest against all knowledge of the crime. But when he came in sight of the green lights of the police station his stubbornness gave way. Tom was on the alert for any signs of the man's weakening, and made the best of it before they got inside the station house.

"Better own up to me that you stole the jewelry," said Tom sternly. "I don't know what they will do to you in there to make you confess. By this time Sally Marble to whom you gave some of the jewelry has probably been arrested and has no doubt told all she knows."

"Sally Marble," gasped Frank. "You know about my gal Sally?"

"Yes, all about her. We know that you gave her a bracelet, a ring and other things which were formerly the property of Dr. Franklin's wife. Better tell me everything."

Frank opened his mouth as if to speak, and then stopped short. He gave the detective a cunning glance, forgetting for the moment the fear which had almost unnerved him a while before.

"How does Ah know you have seen my gal with any jewelry?" he questioned. "Ain't this a trap to catch me?"

"It's no trap, depend upon that!" answered Tom sharply. "You'll find that it is the truth. If you don't tell me now you will have to tell the officers inside when they put you through the third degree."

"The third degree?" exclaimed the negro, again showing fear. He began to shake again, for he had experience on a former occasion the police ordeal known as "the third degree," and quailed at the thought of going through it a second time. His recollections acted so powerfully, that rather than be put on the rack he decided to give whatever information the detective desired to know.

"Yes, the third degree," cried Tom. "And you will get it good, believe me."

"Well, Ah'll tell you everything Ah knows," said the negro. "Ah found dem jewels——"

"In the doctor's house, and in Mrs. Franklin's room?" interrupted Sparks.

"Yes, Ah guess Ah found dem in her room," admitted the negro, hesitingly.

"So far, so good," said Tom. "Now let me know what happened to Mrs. Franklin before you took the jewels from her bureau?"

"Nothin; everything was quiet when Ah came in, and Ah just took dem along."

"But what did you do to Mrs. Franklin when she woke up and discovered you with her jewelry in your hand?"

The negro hesitated, but Tom muttered "Third degree" and looked meaningly in the direction of the station house. This spurred him on to unburden himself.

"Why——er—Ah jist had to keep her from screaming and waking up everybody nearabouts," he continued.

"And then——"

"Ah had to tie her to the bedpost and put a towel in her mouf so she wouldn't make no noise."

"Is that all?" And Tom faced the negro so that the light from the street lamp shone full on the man's features while he asked the question.

"Deed, it is," declared Frank earnestly.

"How about the marks on the woman's throat?"

The negro gave a start.

"Marks, boss? Ah didn't put no marks on the lady's throat." And the negro spoke as if he meant what he said, and was not trying to deceive the detective.

"Yes, marks of a man's fingers, showing that she was choked to death. What have you to say about that?"

The negro did not answer. He could not from a terror gripping at his heart.

"Come along," cried Tom, pulling him by the arm, and walking up the station-house steps.

Frank could hardly drag one foot after the other, and Tom almost had to drag him inside the door.

A flood of light revealed to his sight bleak stern walls, a bare floor worn full of holes by hundreds of shuffling feet as their guilty owners came unwillingly to the desk to have their pedigrees taken by a frowning, deep-voiced officer, who looked as though he searched the very thoughts of those whose deeds were evil. Contemplation of the law, as symbolized by the large blue-coated men standing in groups before the desk on which lay open the blotter which was shortly to receive a short history of his life, brought beads of perspiration to the black man's forehead. His knees gave way, and with a despairing cry he sank to the floor.

The sergeant looked over the desk at the cowering heap crumpled up on the boards, and shot a glance at Sparks.

"What's that bag of rags, Tom?" he asked.

"The coon that your men and I set out to get in the tenement."

"What a sight! Where did you pick him up?"

"In the factory we watched," replied the detective. "He waited until he thought everybody had left the neighborhood and climbed down the fire-escape disguised to look like a rag-bag to throw people off the track."

"Well, well, that is a clever dodge; worthy of a better criminal," said the sergeant. "Hey, you, get up there on your feet. This ain't any Turkish mosque to sit down and pray in."

By this time the police officers who had been standing round, came close to get a look at the strange sight, and one of them grabbed the negro by the arm, pulling him to his feet.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HOTEL BEAT.

After some moments the fellow became calm enough to answer the questions put to him by the sergeant. Then he was led off to a cell, and Tom turned his attention to the woman to whom the colored man had given the stolen jewelry.

He had left hurried instructions with one of the plainclothes men who accompanied him earlier in the evening to the tenement to arrest Frank, not to let the woman, Sally Marble, escape. This man had remained behind while the others gave chase after the negro, and Sally was now comfortably ensconced in another cell, waiting to be called as a witness, and wondering whether the bulls would get her friend Frank.

The jewelry in her possession was now in the sergeant's desk and Tom examined it to see if his fellow sleuth had obtained all that he had seen in his interview with the colored woman. There were several pieces beside those including the missing earring, and they answered the description of others taken from Dr. Franklin's house.

Indeed, when he drew forth an inventory from his note and began to count up, he was able to account for all except one diamond ring. To make sure whether he had made a complete recovery of the dead woman's property, he again went over the articles left with the pawnbroker. They were all there except the one diamond ring.

Going down to the negro's cell he questioned the black about the missing solitaire. A few words convinced the detective that the man knew nothing about it; and furthermore that it had never been in his possession.

Who then had the ring? Sparks was certain that it had disappeared from the house at the time of the robbery and murder of the doctor's wife.

The pawnbroker was sent for and he identified the negro as the man who had pawned the jewels. Convinced that no more information could be obtained in Albany likely to clear up the mystery, Sparks decided to take his prisoner back to New York; also the woman, Sally Marble, as a material witness.

Having made up his mind on this point he arranged to take an early train in the morning; and at five o'clock the next day was speeding on his way with the prisoners to the metropolis.

On his arrival at the Grand Central depot he bundled his colored companions into a patrol wagon he had telegraphed ahead for, and shortly had them safe in a cell at headquarters.

As he stood watching the turnkey shut in the prisoners, an attendant came down the corridor and spoke to the detective.

"Mr. Sparks, the commissioner wants to see you at once," said the man.

Tom thanked him and hurried to the private office of the commissioner. The moment he entered the room the commissioner motioned the detective to shut the door tight.

They were now alone without danger of being overheard by any one, and the commissioner disclosed the nature of the business he had in mind.

"Tom, have you got the person who is responsible for that Franklin murder?" The detective briefly outlined the case and expressed his belief that he would soon solve the baffling situation.

"Well, then, Tom, I better let the matter I want you to take hold of rest until you are through with the case."

"What seems to be the trouble?" asked Tom.

"You see, it's this way, the slickest hotel 'beat' has struck town with an entirely new game, and none of the other men in the department are able to lay hand on him," said the commissioner.

"What's his particular kind of graft?" asked Sparks. "I might be able to start on the fellow's tracks while I am winding up the Franklin case."

The commissioner explained. The man a few days before appeared at one of the big hotels with a real estate broker and told the proprietor that he wanted to buy a half interest in the establishment. The broker, who was an innocent party to the transaction, left the man, expecting to get his commission later on when the negotiations were put through. The fellow explained that he was a hotel steward in the West, and how he had just come into a good-sized legacy, which he intended to use for establishing himself in a business of his own.

The alleged steward bolstered up his claims to a knowledge of buying supplies by showing numerous letters, the contents of which vouched for his assumed familiarity with the subject.

Asked if he would like an option on part ownership of the hotel, the affluent steward seemed much impressed. Three hundred thousand dollars were required to become a Broadway boniface at this

particular place, and though he considered the sum large, yet he saw nothing he liked so well.

He was in no particular hurry to buy, but he would soon decide. It was not long before he got chummy with the owner, or, rather, the owner got chummy with him. Why not get acquainted if they were about to become closely associated in the management of the hotel?

Under such circumstances he was naturally invited to move in. And he did so with alacrity. He was not encumbered with trunks, his baggage consisting of one suit case. The trunks, of course, would come later, with the rest of his effects. In the meantime, the gentleman with a mania for buying hotels was made comfortable in the best suite of rooms, and nothing was too good for his cultivated palate in the restaurant and bar. His slips from these places were signed "E. M."

During the daytime he was round the corridors "negotiating," and in the evening he would suddenly make requests for money. He would ask for fifty or one hundred dollars at a time, explaining to the cashier that he expected soon to become a partner. Then after having the best the house afforded, as long as it was deemed wise to "negotiate," the gentleman quietly departed without leaving his address. On scrutiny of the signature on the bar and restaurant checks the proprietor decided that the initials "E. M." had nothing to do with the fellow's name, but were indicative of a waggish and humorous desire to let him know that he considered the proprietor an "easy mark."

But the hotel man did not see any fun in the swindle, and had asked the police commissioner, his personal friend, to try to get the fellow behind the bars as soon as possible, not only because of the trick played on himself, but to prevent the fraud being worked on other trusting landlords.

And so the commissioner desired Tom to get after the man at once.

"Will you run him down?" the commissioner asked.

"Yes, I'll bear the case in mind, and begin to hunt him right after clearing up this present mystery," replied Sparks. "I might be able to try sooner than I expect. By the way, what does he look like?"

"Tall, dark hair, wears a long black mustache—which he probably has shaved off by this time—and has a small-star-shaped scar on his left cheek."

This terminated the interview, and Sparks, leaving the commissioner's office, went back to the negro's cell before going out of the building. The detective wanted to make sure in his mind whether the black man was really guilty of the murder, for judging from the way he acted in Albany, Tom felt that perhaps after all robbery was the only crime he had committed.

He had a long session with the colored prisoner, and under threats of the "third degree" managed to get the truth from him. While he admitted having robbed the physician's house, and now that he was caught with the goods was willing to take his medicine, he stubbornly maintained ignorance of the graver crime. Severe cross-examination also convinced Tom that the fellow had no accomplice.

Then, recalling the tuft of hair he found outside the house and its similarity to the hairs he pulled from the gorilla for comparison, Tom decided to follow that clew still further. Acting on this decision he served notice on the manager of the circus, for if it was proved that the ferocious brute had strangled a human being the creature was too dangerous to be allowed to live.

But how did the gorilla have a hand in the grewsome events of that early morning in the doctor's house? Tom thought of all possible ways. The best he could figure out was that the gorilla, after getting loose from its cage, wandered off in the woods near Dr. Franklin's house, and in making a tour of inspection in the neighborhood out of mere curiosity, was attracted by the lightening-rod. This he must have climbed, right after the negro had made his escape through the window in the cellar. The creature then discovered Mrs. Franklin gagged and bound, went to the bed to investigate; and when the terror-stricken woman struggled to get free at the sight of the horrible object, his stunted animal intelligence probably supposed her actions to mean a challenge. In his anger and resentment he probably leaped on the bed and buried his long wiry fingers in the poor woman's throat, shutting off her breath in a few seconds.

This supposition seemed reasonable yet the detective suspended judgment until he could discover proofs that such a thing actually happened.

These conclusions Tom came to while away from headquarters, after his last talk with the colored man, Frank. Now he was on his way to Brooklyn to give the doctor an account of what had happened since seeing him last. Presently Sparks approached a pawnbroker's shop, where he was known, and walked in to see if the man had received any pledges during his absence from the city.

Just as he was going inside a man coming from the opposite direction brushed hastily by and started to enter the door. Sparks had only time to get a side view, but in that glance he noticed a scar on the stranger's face.

It was shaped like a star.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MAN FROM BROOKLYN.

But before the man could reach the door another stranger leaped at him from the crowd with a cry and grabbed at an object in his hand, which in the struggle fell to the sidewalk. It was a diamond ring.

Glancing up quickly to see who had caused all this sudden commotion, Tom was astonished to see that the second man was the fellow who had followed him in the cars from Brooklyn. Before he recovered from his surprise, the first man had dashed off down the street, not taking time to pick up the ring. The other fellow, not paying any attention to the ring, which Sparks picked up, started in immediate pursuit, and kept close behind.

"This is Mrs. Franklin's ring!" declared the detective. "Guess I am needed in this deal," and he took up the chase.

Down the avenue the men ran for dear life, and Tom, being a pretty good sprinter himself, was right behind. As he ran along he wondered what connection the men had, if any, or was it just a case of a stranger seeing a chance to steal a valuable and trying to get away with it? Still he felt that the two men had met before. In this supposition he was correct, for the next moment the second man shouted to the man leading the chase.

"Hey, you!" he cried at the top of his voice, "give me back my ring! I've been looking for you all day since you stole it from me! Stop thief, stop thief!"

This cry rang out on the clear air, and everybody stopped to ascertain the trouble. A number of pedestrians took up the chase, but it did not do them any good to fall in behind, as the two men were fast runners. But a little later on the cry attracted the attention of persons far up the street who turned, and seeing the fleeing men and hearing the shouts of their pursuers, supposed that they were fugitives from justice. With one accord they tried to intercept the first man, who, realizing their intention, darted through the doorway of a large office building and ran through the corridor which opened on the next street. But the second man was not put off the track by this old trick. On he sped, racing through the corridor shouting at the top of his voice. The first man gained on Tom, however, and a few moments later outdistanced his pursuer. Then he threaded his way through the stream of persons crowding the street, and disappeared in another office building. Although the first stranger had given them the slip, the man who had claimed ownership of the ring was still in sight of the detective.

"A stern chase is a long chase," muttered Tom, as he kept after the man he had seen in Brooklyn. "Guess I need him more just now than the other fellow."

Presently the second man relaxed his efforts to overtake the man in front, and walked along considerably out of breath. He evidently had forgotten the detective if he had seen him in the first place. He acted as though he had been so intent on catching the man who had the diamond that he was unconscious of the detective's presence.

Be that as it may, the Brooklyn man went on without turning to see who was behind him. Sparks gradually came closer, intending to see where the fellow expected to go to finally. He did not have long to wait, for half a block farther the man went into a big skyscraper and took a seat in a bootblack's chair. When he sat down so Tom was able to get a front view he gave a start. There was something familiar about the buttons on the man's coat.

Tom stationed himself at the door in an inconspicuous corner, to keep an eye on the man until he should start on his travels again. There was some little delay, for it happened to be a busy hour with the bootblack, who had several customers waiting their turn.

While the detective stood reading a paper, his eyes looking over the top of the page instead of at the print, numerous people went in and out of the doors; the elevators shot up to the thirtieth story with their human freight; and everybody passed by with the intense concentrated look of persons trying to crowd two days' work into one. There were so many moving around the corridor that he failed to attract attention. On this he counted, of course; otherwise it would have been impossible to linger in the building for his purpose. For an attitude of leisure has no place in a busy mart of commerce.

Presently Tom cast his eyes toward the door, and to his surprise he saw the man with the scar on his face enter. But before the detective could say or do anything his attention was drawn to the bootblack stand. The stranger from Brooklyn was talking in a loud voice to the man polishing his shoes, and the conversation sounded so extraordinary that everybody stopped and listened in surprise.

"Now put a good polish on those shoes," he was saying. "I have an appointment with the man in the moon. He owes me forty thousand dollars, which I can't collect according to his promise unless I get there on time. My aeroplane is waiting outside of this building, to carry me there right away. I am going to take along a few souvenirs to my friend, the man in the moon. Have you got anything you want to send him? When I build my railroad from the earth to the moon we all will go on a visit, eh?"

The speaker had raised his voice to a high pitch by this time, and of course everybody stopped to look at him. His face was working spasmodically, and a vacant stare revealed only too well the mental condition of the poor fellow.

"Well, I declare," exclaimed Tom, "that chap is wooxy in his thought dome. No wonder he acted strange the day he followed me from Brooklyn."

As these reflections passed through the detective's mind, he saw the man having his shoes blacked glance at the door, his gaze falling on the man with the scar.

"Now there is going to be another chase," he told himself, expecting to see the man jump down from the stand and run after the scarfaced person, crying, "Stop thief!"

But nothing of the kind happened. Instead, the lunatic (it was quite evident to all beholders that such was the condition of the man sitting on the bootblack's chair) simply stared vacantly at the man he had been wildly chasing only a few minutes before. In the irresponsible way of his kind, he had forgotten the incident which had just held his attention so strenuously. The appearance of the man with the diamond ring now had no meaning for him; and though his eyes were also turned in the direction of Tom, the presence of the detective did not seem to revive any recollection of the events of the previous trip from Brooklyn to Manhattan.

Nevertheless, Sparks was very much interested in him. How did the ring come into his possession originally? There was no doubt of his having it before the man with the scar. Otherwise the latter would not have acknowledged the previous ownership of the solitaire by running away when accused of stealing it from the lunatic.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCLUSION.

Sparks wanted to arrest the two men, and they were right here within his grasp. But while taking one, the other might get suspicious and disappear. Just then an assistant of the detective, a young fellow he had broken into the business, but who had not been called upon to help in the present case, came into the building. Seeing his chief he walked over to exchange a few words of inquiry concerning another mystery the young assistant had been put on earlier in the week. He did not have time to say much for Sparks quickly told him to hurry to the maniac's side and see that he did not get away until Sparks made another arrest; and the detective quietly pointed in the direction of the man whose face was scarred in such a peculiar manner.

Sparks then sidled toward him and before the fellow realized what had happened, whispered a few words that made him start.

"Don't attempt to move, for I have you covered," said the detective. "You are under arrest."

The fellow blustered up and turned an indignant look on Tom, who calmly met his eye with a glance that betokened great earnestness. The next moment a pair of handcuffs was slipped over the prisoner's wrists.

"Never mind playing innocent," answered the detective. "You know the job I refer to; the hotel-buying dodge you worked so slick uptown."

"I don't know what you are talking about," protested the man. "You have made a grave mistake."

"Yes?" sneered Tom. "But it would be a grave mistake if I let you get away!"

The man saw that it was useless to bluff any longer. "I'll go," he said quietly. "But can't I ride in a cab, to avoid unnecessary attention?"

"Certainly, if you have the price of the fare," answered Tom. "And you ought unless all the money is spent you borrowed from the hotel man who expected to take you in as a partner."

In the meantime Sparks' assistant had got close to the lunatic and was ready to grab him if he showed violence. He saw Tom walking his way, the man with the scar a little ahead of the detective. Sparks went to a telephone near the bootblack stand and rang up the nearest station for a patrol wagon. The man with the scar gave him and inquiring look, but it was explained that the black Maria was to convey some one else. After hanging up the receiver, the detective sent one of the loungers in the corridor to the street for the policeman on the beat.

When that official arrived Tom explained about the lunatic, and cautioned him to stand ready to give his assistant help if anything should happen before the arrival of the patrol wagon. Then he whispered instructions to the young man concerning what he was to do on the appearance of the vehicle. The maniac was to be taken to headquarters and kept there until he arrived, if the cab Tom and his prisoner were to ride in did not get to Mulberry street until later.

Presently the cab came to the doorway and the two men got in. On the trip to headquarters he questioned his companion closely about the diamond ring in his possession. At first the man professed ignorance, but no man could parry a keen cross-examiner like Tom Sparks very long without committing himself. Finally he admitted how he obtained it. The admission showed a plain case of theft. He was walking along the Bowery when he noticed a fine diamond ring in the hands of the man in front of him. The diamond, which was of particular brilliancy, caught his eye and held him fascinated by its potent iridescence. An overpowering desire seized him to gain possession of the beautiful stone. Diamonds exercise a peculiar power over many persons, and they long to handle and fondle these rare and costly baubles.

Although he was a swindler, yet he did not want to steal the stone for its value, as would be the case of the majority of law-breakers. He just wanted to have it in his pocket, to take out and look at its changing colors in the sunlight, he explained.

"How about you going into the pawnshop when that man tried to grab it out of your hand?" asked Tom.

"I intended to take something out instead of putting anything in soak," he answered. He drew a number of tickets from his pocket, and their ancient date lent color to the man's explanation. Tom let it go at that, as he had more important things to think of just then.

Not long afterward the cab pulled up before headquarters, and Tom went inside with his prisoner. Half an hour later the patrol drove up and Tom's assistant entered the building with the maniac. The man had proved docile enough, and the ride was uneventful.

Leaving the hotel "beat" to the tender mercies of the commissioner, Tom went to the cell of the lunatic and asked his assistant if he had searched the man and

(Continued on page eight.)

GET POWER

The Supply Comes From Food.

If we get power from food why not strive to get all the power we can. That is only possible by use of skilfully selected food that exactly fits the requirements of the body.

Poor fuel makes a poor fire and a poor fire is not a good steam producer.

"From not knowing how to select the right food to fit my needs, I suffered grievously for a long time from stomach troubles," writes a lady from a little town in Missouri.

"It seemed as if I would never be able to find out the sort of food that was best for me. Hardly anything that I could eat would stay on my stomach. Every attempt gave me heartburn and filled my stomach with gas. I got thinner and thinner until I literally became a living skeleton and in time was compelled to keep to my bed.

"A few months ago I was persuaded to try Grape-Nuts food, and it had such good effect from the very beginning that I have kept up its use ever since. I was surprised at the ease with which I digested it. It proved to be just what I needed.

"All my unpleasant symptoms, the heartburn, the inflated feeling which gave me so much pain disappeared. My weight gradually increased from 98 to 116 pounds, my figure rounded out, my strength came back, and I am now able to do my housework and enjoy it. Grape-Nuts food did it." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich.

"A ten days' trial will show anyone some facts about food.

Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a reason.

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

Wanted to Know.

Father—That young man was here again last night.

Daughter—Yes, papa.

"Anything encouraging?"

"Yes, papa; he said he heard two could live as cheaply as one."

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Marks—My old aunt had not been dead twenty-four hours when her parrot died, too.

Parks—The poor bird died of grief, I suppose.

Marks—No. Poison.

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DAZZLING SCHEMES;

Or, Love and Revolutions

By WILL LISENBEE

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CHAPTER X.

PAUL AS A DETECTIVE.

PAUL Murray, private secretary to Bobby Henning, was a bright young man. Had he been less bright the fact that he spoke Spanish like a native would have made his services valuable to his employer. But he was naturally shrewd, scholarly for one of his years and of good moral character.

He read Don Quixote and other Spanish classics in the original, but he was not required to read these to Bobby. Bobby was not interested in Spanish classics nor in the idioms of the language as much as he was concerned regarding what the inhabitants of Guadalayara ate. And so he was only required to read and translate into comprehensive English, the articles printed in the Guadalayaran newspapers regarding the food supplies and the progress of the revolution.

Bobby Henning was not a hard master. Not believing in hard and continuous exertion for himself, he did not impose it upon his secretary. Paul Murray, as a consequence, had considerable leisure, and being of a restless and inquisitive mind, he employed his leisure in acquiring knowledge of various kinds. This propensity sometimes led him into adventures. It promised to do so now.

There was one thing Paul Murray had a contempt for. That was a mystery. A mystery of any kind, he looked upon, as a humbug, and it gave him infinite relief to prove it.

He had heard much talk about the inhabitants of Dragon Castle, and the mystery surrounding the presence of the beautiful Countess of Zara and her peerless protege at the old ruin invited his attention.

"A mystery," he once remarked, "is a name we give to a thing we have not the intelligence to understand, or have not seen or tasted or felt or smelled. What is a mystery to one may be a very commonplace affair to another. The man who runs away from home and leaves his family without any known cause, the people call a mystery, but to the man he robbed he is simply a vulgar rogue."

Paul would have resented the inference that he was a detective, yet he took great pleasure in performing the offices of such—not for pay, however, but merely for the satisfaction it gave him.

As was before stated, he had been attracted by the stories that were afloat about the Countess of Zara and her fair protege, and his interest in the pair was intensified when Bobby and Sandy became associated with them.

He believed that the two young men were about to get into serious trouble by their visit to Dragon Castle, and he felt that it was his duty to find out the past history of the two women who inhabited the place and of whom so much was being said.

He knew well enough where to apply for such information. In strolling about San Vincente, he had made the acquaintance of a number of the old inhabitants. Among these was a middle-aged Spaniard by the name of Francisco Estrada, a garrulous fellow who had once been employed in some capacity at Dragon Castle. He kept a little shop in one of the obscure streets near the water front. He had lived an adventurous life, and he frequently regaled Paul with stories of his adventures.

He was fond of the red wine that came from the wine presses on the hills, and when cheered by the inspiring beverage, he would become very confidential and tell the secrets of his life.

Customers in his little shop were not plentiful, and Paul found him at leisure and more than willing to assist in drinking a bottle of wine while they talked. It pleased him that Paul could converse with him in Spanish, for though he spoke English after a fashion, he felt that his knowledge of it did not permit him to give coloring and dramatic effect to his speech afforded by his native tongue.

Yes, he had lived at Dragon Castle for more than a year, he told Paul as he sipped the wine. He was employed to do work about the grounds and in the garden. That was while the Count and Countess of Zara occupied the castle. The Count was a young Russian who had come to Guadalayara on account of some political intrigue in which he had become involved in his own country. He had a fiery temper, and was insanely jealous of his beautiful young wife.

"I did not like the count," said Francisco with a shake of the head. "He was overbearing and treated his servants as if they were dogs. But he was liberal in payment for everything, and that was one redeeming feature.

"They lived in great style at the castle, though in a quiet way, not going out a great deal and not having much company. It was while I was at the castle that the count's cousin came. He was a sort of a vagabond, I took it, and lived on the bounty of the count. He was a photographer and an artist and a musician as well, and I think he did some work for some of the illustrated papers of his own country.

"He had a studio in the castle and he painted a portrait of the countess, so I understood, though I never saw it, for I left the count's employ about that time.

"Many thanks; I know you will do that. Do you happen to know anything about Miss Dangerfield, the young lady who is staying at the castle with the countess?"

"Not a thing. I never heard of her before she came here with the countess a short time ago."

"And Ruric Damonoff—when did he return to Guadalayara?"

"I do not know."

"You have heard of the killing of Louis Torres last night at the castle?"

"Yes, sir, and do not doubt that Ruric did it or had it done."

"And you think be is in sympathy with the revolutionists?" asked Paul.

"So every one seems to think."

"And the Countess of Zara—do you think she is in league with Ruric Damonoff?"

"That is hard to tell. The two are not friends, it seems, for you will re-

"I hit him a blow that sent him to earth."

But it was said that the countess fell in love with Ruric Damonoff, the count's cousin, and there was a dreadful scandal. In any case the count was almost insane over the matter and in the heat of passion he shot Ruric Damonoff and left him for dead in his studio. He next tried to kill his wife, but she escaped him and hid herself in the tower of the castle. He left her and went to South America where he died not long after. Meantime the countess went to Paris and people of San Vincente heard nothing more of her till she returned recently.

"I never learned all the particulars regarding the affair, but it was said that the countess was desperately in love with Ruric. And the trouble between her and the count was brought to a climax by the discovery of a picture—a photograph of the countess taken by Ruric. It was in Greek costume and partly nude, and the accidental discovery of the picture brought on what might have been a double tragedy.

"Ruric was not seriously wounded by the shot and it was said that he followed the countess to Paris. Nothing beyond that is known. There are other incidents connected with the affair that I might get from a friend who was at the castle at the time, if you are interested, but what I have told you is all I can remember just now."

"I would like to have every detail of the affair that can be had," said Paul, as he ordered another bottle of wine, "and if you can oblige me in this matter I'll even up the score."

"Ah, my good friend, you have already more than done that," said Francisco with profuse expressions of gratitude. "I shall bring you every scrap of information to be had."

member that Ruric was knocked down in the Cafe St. Denis the other evening by a young American because he was annoying the countess. That does not go to show that there is any friendship between the countess and the Russian."

"Have you ever heard as to whether or not the countess ever married Ruric?" asked Paul.

"No one seems to know anything about it, but I am quite sure that they were never married. In fact, it is suspected that Ruric is now paying his respects to this Miss Dangerfield, and some have expressed the opinion that the girl has been the cause of the estrangement between the countess and Ruric."

Paul reflected a moment.

"Have you any idea," he said, "what has brought the countess to Guadalayara?"

Francisco shrugged his shoulders.

"Who is so wise as to know why a woman does anything?" he asked. "We shall have to wait and see."

CHAPTER XI.

THE EVENING IN ROME.

The adventures of the night at Dragon Castle gave Sandy McDonald much food for thought during the next day.

Bobby had been called to his downtown office on important business, and Sandy occupied his time in strolling about the city, smoking a large number of cigars and thinking.

Newsboys, with true American enterprise, were loudly proclaiming the sensational contents of their wares and brandishing papers with glaring headlines, but as all the papers were printed in Spanish, Sandy felt that, with his limited knowledge of the language, it would be a hopeless task to attempt to

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render the contents into intelligent English.

He bought one of the papers, however, and thrust it into his pocket. Later when he glanced at the headlines of the leading article, he saw the names of Luis Tores, the Countess of Zara and Ruric Damonoff. In the body of the article he recognized his own name and that of Bobby's (both misspelled), but of the text he could make out but little.

He met Bobby at the Cafe St. Denis where they went for lunch. The countenance of Bobby wore a thoughtful look.

"Have you heard the news?" he asked.

"I have a paper that probably contains some news, but I have not been able to put much of it into English excepting the names," Sandy replied.

"I have been talking to one of the secret service men," Bobby said, "and I gathered from what he said that both the countess and Miss Dangerfield were to be held as prisoners in the castle till the affair of last night could be investigated."

"Then they are really prisoners there?"

"Hardly," replied Bobby. "They are gone."

"Gone!"

"Yes, escaped."

"And with the guards about the castle?" Sandy exclaimed. "How did they manage it?"

Bobby smiled.

"It is not hard to guess," he said. "The countess is said to be fabulously rich. By the investment of a few hundred dollars they might have ridden away on a white elephant and never been seen."

Sandy smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

"Is that the sort of patriots they have in Guadalayara?" he asked.

Bobby sipped his wine slowly, looking through the glass at his companion.

"It is the sort of patriots that flourish in all latitudes," he observed. "In New York, in London and Paris. If money could buy nothing but the necessaries of life, how many would consider it worth while to be rich? I wonder," he added, "where the countess and Miss Dangerfield are?"

"They may have left Guadalayara," remarked Sandy, regretfully. "Do you think it would be possible to find any of those patriots who could give us a tip as to their whereabouts?"

"It might not be a very safe proceeding," Bobby declared.

"Why?"

"We are already mixed up in the affair of last night, and no doubt there are many that believe we are in a conspiracy with the two women. But for the president himself, I have no doubt that we should both have been arrested."

"The blundering fools!" exploded Sandy. "What the Sam Hill do they think we care who rules this little wasp-nest of a republic?"

"If you had read the papers you might change your mind. Paul translated the article on the killing of Tores for me a little while ago, and there are strong hints that we may be here for the purpose of giving aid to the revolution. We are referred to as two young American millionaires who for some secret purpose of our own may be ready to use our millions to overthrow the government. 'American capital,' the editor said in a leading editorial, 'is fast becoming a menace to the Southern republics. It is being pushed in wherever an opening can be found, and by bribery and other disreputable methods, backed by their own government, the Yankees are fast absorbing all the resources of the South American and Central American republics!' That is the way we look to the Guadalayaran outfit. But thanks to the common sense of President Aguerra, he doesn't share in the opinion of the rabble. And I have no doubt that the newspaper correspondents sent here by the big New York dailies will wire all sorts of sensational rubbish to their papers about us."

"Well, I'll be cursed!" exclaimed Sandy. "I never thought of that! And this dope may get into the Western papers?"

"No doubt of it," declared Bobby. "The Associated Press will send the news to the Western papers, and I should not be surprised if the papers in Oklahoma City have got the story on their front pages this morning, with glaring headlines, proclaiming to the world that Sandy McDonald has joined the revolutionists in Guadalayara!"

"Good Lord!" cried Sandy. "If they did that my old dad would have a fit."

"And mine," interposed Bobby, "would have two fits; and probably cable for me to come home. But I'll put the old man wise when I write to him."

As they left the cafe and walked in the direction of Bobby's office, they could not help seeing that they attracted the attention of the passers-by, and the glances directed at them were not reassuring. But to these they paid no heed.

"Those geezers," said Sandy, "look on us as if we had been in a conspiracy to run away with their stinky little republic. Why, I'd a whole lot rather be a constable in Oklahoma than the President of Guadalayara!"

"They promise to furnish you entertainment during your visit," observed Bobby. "A sort of Guadalayaran Nights' Entertainment it will be, however."

They had reached the office by this time. The shades were adjusted so as to exclude the fierce rays of the sun, and the monotonous drone of electric fans pulsed soothingly through the gray shadows.

Bobby lit a cigarette, and for some time he sat in thoughtful silence.

"My life, so far," he said at length, "has been free from romances or adventure in a general way, but my destiny seems to change when I set foot on foreign soil. It happened when I ran over to Europe to spend my vacation, and it began again after my arrival here."

"And what did you run onto across the water?" asked Sandy. "It wasn't a revolution, I reckon?"

"No, but it was something I have never forgotten," replied Bobby. He was silent for a moment. "It was while I was in Rome," he went on. "I had gone there to visit a friend who was studying sculpture. Rome didn't look very good to me. It was too much like a graveyard, for every one that I had ever heard of as being a resident of the town was dead and buried, and I could do nothing to get the chill out of my bones as I wandered about reading epitaphs. I used to stroll about the city looking at the people and wonder who among them were the descendant of the Catos, the Catilines, the Caracallas and the Caligulas and the various brands of Caesers, and as I saw no one shoveling out money to the natives excepting a young American pork-packer from Chicago, I came to the conclusion that the Caligulas had run out.

"One evening, just after dusk, I was strolling in the vicinity of the church of Triniti del Monte. As I turned into the street leading to the church a carriage rolled slowly by, and as it came to the church the driver stopped the vehicle and a woman got out. I passed very close to her as she alighted and as she turned her face toward me I almost stopped short. She was the most beautiful woman I had ever beheld. As I moved on she entered the church. I walked on for some distance, but I want to tell you, Sandy, that I couldn't get the face of that woman out of my mind. I still walked on, wondering who the woman could be. I was sure she was not a native. There was something about her manner, her air, the poise of her head and the delicate contour of her face that convinced me of this. I was seized with a desire to see her again, and I turned about and walked in the direction of the church. The dusk had deepened into night by this time. As I drew near the church she emerged and walked toward the waiting carriage. She was about to enter the vehicle when a man darted from the shadow of some larches and ran toward her. He was a dark-faced Italian—this much I saw as his face was for a moment turned toward the street light, and there was something in the expression of the brutal face that warned me that the fellow was bent on committing a crime.

"I saw him rush toward the woman, and instinctively I leaped to intercept him. I saw the gleam of a knife in his hand as it was uplifted, and I knew that murder was intended! It was then that I used all the strength of every fiber of my body. I cleared the distance at a single bound, and just as the fellow struck, I hit him a blow that sent him to the earth like a chunk of lead. Just the fraction of a second, and I would have been too late. As he fell the point of the knife shot along the woman's shoulder, cutting an ugly gash in the blue silk gown, but she was unharmed. Her face was like chalk, and she would have fallen had I not supported her. In a moment she had recovered and I handed her quickly into the carriage, for I feared that the would-be murderer would renew his attack if I gave him time. But as I turned to where he had fallen I saw that he had struggled to his feet, and the next instant he darted away, leaped across a wall and disappeared.

"The woman leaned weakly back among the cushions but held out her hand to me. 'You are brave,' she said, speaking in English. 'Some time I shall try to tell you how grateful I am. She thrust a card into my hand, and at the moment the driver, either by fear or from pure devilitry, whipped up his team and the carriage was whirled rapidly away.

"I watched the carriage till it disappeared around a corner, and then I walked slowly in the direction of my lodgings. I still held the card in my hand, and as I passed under a street light I looked at it. As I did this I could hardly believe the evidence of my vision. The card was blank!"

CHAPTER XII.

A WARNING.

Bobby lit a fresh cigarette, and for a moment he was silent.

"I stood looking at the card," he continued, "turning it over and over, in a sort of foolish bewilderment. It exhaled a strange and subtle perfume that ravished my senses. I felt as if I had been made the victim of a juggler's trick. The more I thought over the matter, the more firmly I became convinced that the blank card had been given to me by mistake. But that did not relieve my feelings. I think it vexed me even more than it would have done had I known that the blank card had been given to me intentionally. One hates to fall a victim of a stupid blunder, but it was too late to rectify it. The carriage containing the strange beauty had vanished from sight and I might never see her again.

"For a week I explored every nook and corner of Rome, but not the slightest trace could I discover of either the woman or the driver of the carriage. And I left Rome without even knowing her name." He paused while he drew a silver card case from his pocket. "I still have that card," he said, "and the strange sweet perfume still lingers upon it."

"And you never learned her name?" asked Sandy.

"Yes," replied Bobby, slowly, "I have. It all came to me like a stroke of lightning this morning!"

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Sandy. "Surely you did not find her in San Vincente!"

"I found her last night," said Bobby. "She is the Countess of Zara!"

For some time neither Sandy nor Bobby spoke. The monotonous droning of the electric fans mingled with the muffled sounds of traffic without.

Sandy was too greatly amazed to speak—not only amazed, but filled with a sudden joy. He put out his hand and grasped Bobby's.

"It's great, Bobby!" he cried. "We are comrades in a common cause, and that is——"

"I understand," Bobby laughed happily. "Our aim is to find the countess and her charming protege? Enough! They shall be found if they are on top of earth."

A knock came at the door and a boy entered. He could not have been over 15 years of age. A pair of bright, intelligent eyes looked from a face made dark by exposure to the tropic sun.

He stood hesitating, looking first at Sandy and then at Henning, holding his dilapidated straw hat in his hand.

"I want see Senor Henning," he said in broken English.

Bobby smiled.

"Well, you see him," he said. "I am Mr. Henning."

The boy hesitated for a moment; then he drew something from his pocket and advancing, laid it in Bobby's hand.

It was a letter. Across the square linen envelope was written "Mr. Robert Henning." A delicate feminine hand, and there was something about it as he broke the seal that caused his heart to beat tumultuously. He glanced at the single sheet, read it with glowing color coming over his face. Then he took several pieces of silver from his pocket, dropped them into the hand of the amazed messenger and said, "There is no answer required."

With muttered expressions of gratitude, the boy made a low bow and withdrew, clasping the silver in his hands.

"Is it a love letter?" asked Sandy.

"I really never got one since I was a boy," declared Bobby, "but if getting one would make me feel any happier than this has, I hope some one will write me one right away."

Sandy whistled.

"How mysterious!" he cried. "What sort of a game is this you are giving me?"

"Sandy," said Bobby, "it seems that I am in for another adventure. By George! I am burning with impatience to get into it. This note is from the Countess of Zara. Listen: 'My Kind Friend in Need,' he read, 'I am writing this to ask a favor. Go to Dragon Castle tonight at ten. You will be met at the door by Jose Perrigo who will conduct you to the room with the alcove where we met last night. Under a rug in the northwest corner of the alcove you will find a sealed package. Get it and keep it for me till called for. Send no answer. I am praying that I have not asked too much. Can you guess why I believe you will do what I ask? Katherine.'"

"Bobby," said Sandy, "you are a lucky dog! You are going, of course?"

"If I live till ten o'clock," declared Bobby.

"Can you guess what she means by the last sentence?"

"Can you?" asked Bobby.

"I can. I believe she has already recognized you as the man who saved her life in Rome."

"That is just what I thought, but I wanted your opinion first."

"What if the castle is watched by the police?"

"I shall not let that trouble me," said Bobby. "Besides, I am quite sure that the castle is not being watched since the women gave them the slip."

A knock came at the door and a messenger boy came in with a telegram. Bobby tore it open. It was in cipher and from his father.

"It's a callegram from the old man," he said. "Now I shall get it straight from the shoulder, I fancy."

He stepped to the outer office and tossed it to Paul Murray.

"Put this thing into English for me as quickly as you can," he said. "I want to see what's coming to me."

In a few moments Paul laid the transcript on his desk. It ran:

New York, May 17, 19—

"Robert Henning, San Vincente, Guadalayara: If you are there to mix in a revolution come home and I'll send the

Continued on page eight.)

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Anyway the tire of a lazy man isn't easily punctured.

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Never judge a man's strength by the ease with which he breaks a promise.

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The man behind the bass drum is not the only chap that beats his way through life.

There's nothing original about finding fault with others or concealing your own faults.

At the age of three score and ten many a man reminds us of an experiment that failed.

The man who can please a woman and keep her pleased has no time for anything else.

A man always thinks a woman ought to be interested in the things that interest him.

Nearly ever father says he'll whip the school teacher that whips his child—but he never does.

After a man has taken a few "eye openers" it is almost impossible for him to keep his mouth shut.

It is surprising how many nice things a woman can say about her husband—after she breaks into the widow class.

After a man has had a small ambition gratified he is never happy until he can dig up a larger one to center his hopes on.

Anyway the workman who turns out a poor job is a decided improvement on the one who does nothing but stand around and make remarks.

(Continued from page seven.)

janitor to take your place. I am not financing filibusters. Send explanation.

"MORTIMER W. HENNING."

Bobby tossed it to Sandy.

"It looks as though the New York papers had done just what we feared they'd do," he said.

"Isn't that the truth?" commented Sandy after reading the message. "I should not be surprised to get a mate to this from my daddy. We have got to square ourselves with the home offices."

"Sure thing."

Bobby took a pencil and wrote the following which he read to Sandy:

"Whole story stupid blunder. President will take shares in company. Every thing lovely. BOBBY."

"That ought to do the business," nodded Sandy.

"It will. When the old man digests that he will see that I am onto my job."

He gave the message to Paul to be put into cipher, and told him to get it on the wire at once.

An hour later Sandy received the following cablegram from his father.

"Oklahoma City, Okla., U. S. A.

"Sandy McDonald, San Vincente, Gaudalayara: Papers connect you with adventuress and revolution. If you get into trouble smell of my currency won't trouble you. Explain.

"YOUR FATHER."

"It is worse than we thought," commented Bobby gravely. "They have made the story even more sensational than we suspected they would."

"I'd like to wring the neck of that correspondent," exclaimed Sandy. "It is plain that the story has been given color by mixing up the countess and Miss Dangerfield with the tragedy and the revolution as well, and in order to give the affair interest in America, they have classed us as revolutionists and conspirators. Say, that is fierce!"

"It isn't anything less," said Bobby with distress. "It seems from what your father says that the countess has been characterized as an adventuress. By George! This is a pretty muddle!"

"What can we do?" asked Sandy. "We can't let all that dope go uncontradicted."

Bobby reflected a moment.

"At college we used to see the reporters when we wanted a little lark suppressed," he said. "We might see the correspondents for the New York papers and explain the matter and have them put us right."

"That's a great idea!" cried Sandy. "I'll run out and round them up right away and take them to lunch. If I don't patch up this bad break before I'm done with them it will be because they are a lot of chumps, which I can't believe."

Sandy grabbed his hat and disappeared, while Bobby lit a cigarette and puffed savagely, a look of deep concern on his face. But his face wore a still deeper aspect of disquietude when, a few hours later, he received the following from his father:

"Cut out Countess of Zara. Known here as dangerous adventuress!"

This extremely interesting story will be continued in next week's Ledger, presenting the readers with some very strange happenings. If you are not a subscriber to the Ledger, you are strongly urged to send in your subscription at once. Every family should take the Ledger, as humor and stories and pictures make life brighter and pleasanter for all, bringing health and entertainment and doing every one good. Be wise and attend to this today.

* * *

A Fallen Star.

(Continued from Page Two.)

with a somewhat sheepish grin; even Nina's relative seemed wonderfully subdued. Her astonishment at seeing us in the character of a spoon-to-be-married couple changed insensibly to a deprecatory, even conciliatory, smile.

"Where's the balloon?" I demanded the instant I caught my breath.

"Five miles north of this place in a bit of wilderness," answered the professor. "The fact is," he added, "we haven't thought best to mention the manner of our arrival. Kate—I mean Mrs. Wakeman, is a trifle sensitive. I'd thank you not to make the matter public."

When I turned my anxious gaze toward the others I found Nina and her rejuvenated aunt exchanging confidences in each other's arms, while Whisk critically observed the scene with one ear perked ceilingward.

"He knows nothing of the cursed wealth; and he's the first. I'm supposed to be a housekeeper," I heard her say, then she recovered her Napoleonic manner and waved a commanding hand at the clergyman.

"Proceed with the ceremony," she ordered, "so we can start for home."

"Then you're willing, you approve——"

"My niece is right," she cut in on my query. "Marriages are made in Heaven; but it ain't often that Heaven sends the grooms."

* * *

Moderation is one thing that is rare in the extreme.

The Franklin Mystery.

(Continued from page five.)

found anything that shed light on his identity.

He had; the man's pocket contained newspaper clippings of the murder of Mrs. Franklin, and a card of a private sanitarium two miles from the doctor's house. Tom came closer to the maniac, and as his eyes lighted on the front of the man's coat he drew back with astonishment. The buttons were of metal covered with blue clothing having a brown stripe running across their surface. Then this was the man who had tried to kill him in the lumber yard.

"Have you found anything besides the newspaper clippings and the card?" asked Tom.

"Yes; a small book with some writing on its pages," answered his assistant. "It looks as though it might be a diary."

Opening it, the detective saw much that threw light on the mystery of Mrs. Franklin's murder, although nothing had been written in a coherent manner. The snatches of sentences interesting Sparks were as follows:

"Got away from sanitarium ..... thank heaven .... I see light at last, but the man in the moon watched a monkey come out of a house ..... Through a cellar window ..... dark stairs ..... very quiet ..... Oh, the look in the woman's eyes ..... but I had to kill ..... Why did I jump from the haymow ..... the stick of wood whizzed ..... lumber yard ..... Saw negro ..... had to take diamond ring ..... bureau ..... souvenir ....."

The rest of the record was written in such a scrawl, and the account was so muddled, Tom did not stop to read any more. He saw enough to convince him who killed the doctor's wife. It was this poor demented person, who on his escape from a sanitarium, accidentally came to the Franklin house as he saw the negro escape from the open cellar window, after the black had committed the robbery. As the maniac stood watching the man make off the gorilla entered the yard, and climbed the lightning-rod. The animal was in the room but a second, and came right away without committing any depredation or violence. But what the lunatic had witnessed excited his curiosity, and he entered the house through the window in the cellar, thence going to the room of Mrs. Franklin, the door of which was open.

Overcome by a sudden homicidal mania he attacked the helpless woman as she came out of the influence of the chloroform, which had been administered by the negro, Frank. Then, wishing to take away a souvenir of the awful occasion, he felt along the bureau, his hand coming in contact with the diamond ring, which Frank in his haste had overlooked.

Later, at the sanitarium, Tom learned something which accounted for the finger marks on the towel. The maniac before leaving had found a smoky lamp chimney, and in handling it got his fingers covered with lamp black. A handkerchief in his pocket was used to rub it off; and later when in the doctor's house he must have wiped his hands again, some of the black substance getting on his fingers. Then, as he picked up the towel, dark marks were left on the cloth.

When Dr. Franklin took the towel from his wife's face some of the substance was transferred to his own fingers. He was too nervous and excited to give any coherent account of himself when questioned by Jones, and consequently excited suspicion.

The negro was convicted and sentenced to twenty years for the robbery, and the maniac sent to Matteawan, the asylum for the criminal insane.

The end.

* * *

Pet Names of Royalty.

Queen Victoria said at the death of one of her relatives, "She was the last person who had the right to call me Victoria." Kings and queens must get very tired of formality sometimes and welcome the familiarity of family life. Here are some of the nicknames by which the royal personages of Europe are known to their nearest and dearest:

The Czar of Russia is "Nicky;" the Czarina "Sunny" or "Alix." One would think that her unhappy life would have deprived her of the first name forever!

Queen Alexandra is Alix also, and the late King was known to his relatives as "Bertie." The dignified German Kaiser is never called anything but "Willie" by his wife, and King George has even called him "Bill." George himself is always "Georgie" to his family.

Queen Mary was once known as "May," but has abandoned that name and signs her family letters now "Toria." The Queen of Norway is "Audie" or "Maudie," and the Duchess of Fife is "Louie." Her sister, Princess Victoria, is known as "Vicky," while the late Duke of Clarence was always "Eddy."

The Duke of Connaught, once known as "Pat," has in later years preferred his rightful Arthur. Princess Henry of Battenberg, mother of the Queen of Spain, is "Trixie" always in her own family, while her son-in-law rejoices in the nickname of either "Alfie" or "Phonso."

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The Sea Trailer;

Or, AFLOAT WITH BUCCANEERS

By WILLIAM H. MANNING

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CHAPTER XVII.

THE BLACK BEAK.

BARRON hesitated with his reply. His straying glance had gone again to the buccaneers, reduced from the freedom of the ocean in their fleet ship to the condition of mere castaways, and he saw that they took their misfortunes hard. Their faces were dark, threatening and angry, and it was clear that they were ripe for any mischief. Aboard the Sweeping Broom they were contented, and kept in check by Captain Duke's firm mastery, but here they smarted under misfortune and Duke's control was lacking.

"This has come to me suddenly," the Virginian finally replied, "and I need time to form a plan. Just what is the situation?"

"We are wrecked, as you see," Miriam explained, "and there have been claims voiced in the boat that we shall starve here. Mockrod was for making boldly for the coast of Australia, but Piper drew an alluring picture of this island and they came."

"Piper! What about him?" Barron eagerly demanded.

"Oh! I fear him more than Mockrod. He claims to be an English country gentleman, and perhaps he is, but I have come to question it in my mind—I wish—I wish he were not so kind to me!"

"The villain! Pity the warship did not shoot him, instead of Captain Duke."

"There is another complication. The Queen claims, and I believe she is right, that Mockrod himself shot Duke during the battle, trying to lay it upon a bullet from the warship. It is plain that Mockrod has cared more for the Queen than he should, and because she shunned him I really think he killed Duke in a cowardly way. Now, she is in great terror."

"Has he the control of the men?"

"Of course, as mate, he succeeded to Duke's offices, and the men have obeyed him freely so far, but I know some of them favor the Queen. Whether she could command the loyalty of enough to defend her in a crisis I do not know."

"How does she regard you?"

"I am at a loss to know. She had eyes and words for nobody aboard the Sweeping Broom but her husband. Strange as it is, they were devoted to each other. She has been courteous to me, but I don't know how she feels."

"And then there is Piper," mused Barron.

"Place him first of all!" exclaimed Miriam. "The new chief is bold, resourceful and headstrong, but Piper is his superior in intelligence, craft, and the art of mastering men. If he were a respectable man and our friend, I should say unhesitatingly that his cunning and skill would carry us all safely through. As it is—"

She paused and hesitated, But Barron was silent.

"As it is," she added, "his cunning remains."

"You and I must try to develop the same trait. This broad island is better than the contracted pirate ship, and it may help us. There are hiding-places, and if we had a boat—"

His gaze strayed to the craft in which the freebooters had come. Already he was studying its possibilities, but as he marked its size his courage wavered. It had been drawn upon the beach, and he knew that neither one man nor two could get it afloat again. Meanwhile, Eli, his only friend, lay helpless in the recess on the ridge.

"There were three men from the Royal Oak left aboard when I escaped from Duke's vessel," he reminded. "What about them?"

"All were in the fight, though whether willingly I don't know, and all were killed but Peter Hawk. He lives, but is badly wounded."

"We cannot rely upon anybody but ourselves."

"Is there nothing in which we can leave the island?"

"Nothing," replied Barron, briefly filled with regret that the raft had not been constructed; though second thought showed him that, as it would have been directly by the water and under the freebooters' eyes, secret departure would be impossible.

"I have wondered," she pursued thoughtfulyy, "why Piper wanted to come here. So many men cannot long exist on a little patch of land, and they will soon grow restless, turbulent and rebellious. I think Mockrod realizes it."

Miriam was aware that she was possibly inviting Piper's anger by talking so long with Barron, and she added a few words and went back to her employer's wife. Slow-witted Mrs. Piper was her wall of defense, though how long the storm would be delayed could not be told.

The buccaneers were making free on the island. Chiefly they were interested in the wreck of the Ursa Major, for there was not a man but harbored hopes of repairing her and getting her afloat to bear them to a more favorable point.

Even Piper, far-seeing as he was, headed a small group of men who stood on the outer sands and speculated on the possibility of excavating a crude dock in which to give her a fresh launching. It was the forlorn hope of men in difficulty.

Mainly, however, the men were bent on seeing what was worth looking at, and they roamed about, half-curious, half-disdainful and wholly discontented and ugly. Among other things these feather-witted persons gave attention to the Ursa Major as if it were a poor kind of show. Some invaded the inboard parts, while others stared at the hull. Among the latter was one burly fellow who spoke in Barron's hearing.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed. "I've seen that brigantine before. Helped to load her once when I was stevedore in Sydney, and it was a little more than a year ago; say about fifteen months."

"Her lettering says she was from London," objected a youthful pirate.

"What of it? Does a ship always stick to her original home port? The Ursa Major has hailed from Sydney for three or four years to my knowledge. She was not of any line, but could be chartered for any desired voyage. When I loaded her she was bound for St. Vincent. That was a short voyage, and I know she came back to Sydney, but where she started for next I don't know."

It happened that Barron was the one most interested in this account. Feeling that he had reliable information, he had placed the Ursa Major in Sydney at just about the time she probably started on her last trip. This fact, combined with the information that she was a chartered vessel gave force to the finding of the waist-belt marked with his father's name. With events forming into line he was ready to believe that Clayton Barron had somehow escaped from the convict thrall upon him, and then sailed for Torrento to secure the treasure.

Had he been slain when Captain Duke attacked the brigantine, or lived to reach Torrento?

The question brought to mind the man who hid in the hills, and the Virginian, usually proof against even the most trivial agitation, became gravely disturbed, and even frightened.

If the hiding man was his father, and if his mind was unbalanced, what would befall him at the hands of the pirates? That he had remained concealed successfully from two unwelcome neighbors did not prove that he could evade a score.

If Clayton Barron fell into the hands of Piper he would, granted that that man was Seagulf, meet with a sudden and disastrous end. Meanwhile, the Virginian, not being able to locate him, could not give him warning.

Presently the young man slipped quietly away and went to talk with Eli Dodd. The stout seaman had seen everything from his recess above, and needed no information beyond the repetition of words that had been spoken below.

"A murrain on the twist that grips my leg!" he exclaimed. "Why the red-hot panikins can't I be on my feet when you need me so bad?"

"There is no twist in your head, Eli."

"I need one!" groaned his comrade. "A normal man can't guess his way out of this trouble. It needs a genius or a fool to do it!"

"Plan, man, plan! There are women below."

"Ah!" quoth Eli sagely. "Keep them together a few days and a rumpus will breed among them, and then you will either get pitchforked into good luck or shoved off the earth. The women will scheme, and the males will help the devilry along by scrapping. That's the way o' the world!"

The man who hid in the hills.

"Mate, there are ropes in the pirate boat. Suppose that I can steal some of them and lash dry logs together on the west coast, making a raft, what would be our chances if you and I, in charge of Miss Lee, took to the sea?"

"Given a stiff mast and a tight-drawing sail, and given an off-shore breeze so lively that it bore hard upon a half-gale and she would foot it some, but, love ye, mate, a raft is only a crawler at the best, and there is a mighty waste of unbroken water west of Torrento."

Barron sighed unconsciously.

"If the pirates didn't chase us, and if food and drink didn't give out, and no hurricane bred to pound the raft to pieces—"

"I see!" curtly interrupted Barron.

The adverse possibilities were massed so thickly that he briefly gave way to discouragement. Presently, however, he regained his usual stubborn courage and, after some further talk with Eli, returned to the lower ground. Piper had his wife and Miriam in tow and was walking along the beach. As Barron neared them they had come upon the tomb of the older ship, before which the self-styled Englishman had paused in evident interest.

"Here," he was saying, "we have an object of melancholy attraction. An ancient ship cast pitilessly upon a barren shore. Notice her rotting timbers, her fallen masts and broken spars, her separated hull that a child might further pick to pieces. What, my good friends,

(Continued on page twelve.)

Take Your Pick

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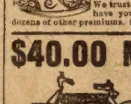

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Hippo—I never could understand why the good eating stuff grows so high up on trees.

Giraffe—Oh, my dear sir, why worry about things above your station in life? Let those with long necks solve that problem.

A Sudden Breach.

"Three dollars a minute?" said the youth who had asked the long-distance telephone rate between him and the lady fair.

"Yes, sir," said the telephone clerk.

"I guess I'm not on speaking terms with her," sighed the youth, sadly counting the two dollars and fifty cents in his purse.

Salutation.

Raggles (cheerily)—Good mornin', boss.

Farmer—It wouldn't be "Good mornin'," if I offered ye work.

Raggles—Right ye are, boss; den it ud be "good day."

The Only Way.

Sue—I have decided definitely not to marry Jack.

Prue—Why, has he proved unworthy?

Sue—No, but, darn him, I can't get him to propose.

THE DIFFERENCE.

Oh, truly it is foolish
Such things to think upon!—
When I was young and happy
Each goose appeared a swan!

And also it is foolish
(But I make no excuse!)—
Now I am old and crank,
Each swan appears a goose!

Baseball and Sentiment.

The baseball player was feeling sentimental. The game was over and the moon had risen, and now the player was with his lady love, trying to hand her a few hot ones.

"I feel," he remarked, "en passant" (he got this stuff from a summer novel), "that with you to cheer me on, I could—er—(there he lost his lines and had to fake), "that I could grab off any pennant the big league was offering."

"Let me get you right," interrupted the lady. "You want me to sit in the bleachers and yell while you line 'em out, eh?"

"That's the dope," he answered, rather surprised that she got his knightly idea so rapidly. She was to cheer him on to victory, and a glance up to where her dear eyes were shining—well, you get it.

"If that's the case," continued the fair dame, "the grounds will have to be laid off in a little better shape. So far I haven't been able to see the diamond."

He wised up and was there with the sparks the next night. And the game wasn't called on account of darkness, believe us.

A Foe to Fiction.

"Don't you think something ought to be done to prevent accidents with runaway horses and motor cars?" asked the timid person.

"Certainly not," replied the publisher. "You would deprive summer novelists of their only means of letting the hero and heroine become acquainted without a formal introduction."

When It Went Wrong.

"He told her that he would gladly die for her."

"The same old bluff. Did he catch her?"

"No. She told him she would gladly let him."

Girl—Are you never stung?

Beekeeper—Why, yes; but I'm so used to being stung when I go to the city to purchase supplies that I don't mind it.

A Vacation Scheme.

"I have gotten a great deal of pleasure from anticipating the trip."

"More pleasure, possibly, than you'll get from the trip itself."

"That's what I think. So I've decided to stay at home and save the money."

M. D.—Sorry, but I forgot my instruments.

Patient—That's all right, doc; there was a burglar here last night and he left some tools.

The Cares of Business.

The old storekeeper down in the country who gave up keeping Turkey red because the women insisted on buying all he had as fast as he got it, must be related to the New Hampshire merchant.

There was nothing he liked so well to do as to lie back in an old armchair on the elm-shaded porch of his store and whittle a green willow stick. One very hot afternoon, just as he got his jackknife out, a boy appeared on the scene with a gallon jug.

"Can I get a gallon of molasses?" he inquired.

"O hum!" growled the storekeeper, showing considerable temper. "Confound it! Nobody else in town's got molasses to sell but me, I suppose." With this stinging rebuke he went in and filled the jug.

Economy.

It was at a reception, and the lady who had been reading up on health culture mistook Lawyer Williams for his brother, the doctor.

"Is it better," she asked confidentially, "to lie on the right side or on the left?"

"Madam," replied the lawyer, "if one is on the right side it isn't often necessary to lie at all."

Not an Exception.

Husband—If a man steals—no matter what it is—he will live to regret it.

Wife—During our courtship you used to steal kisses from me.

Husband—Well, you heard what I said.

TICKLISH

Fortunate.

"She's the most fortunate girl I know of."

"That so?"

"Yes; she's been married three times, and each time successfully."

Life on the Farm.

"These summer boarders are hard to please."

"What's the matter now?"

"They're kicking because I ain't got no field of shredded wheat to show 'em."

Mrs. Wright—In a bathing suit I think my husband looks like Apollo.

Mrs. Dalmer—Don't you mean a pollywog?

Her Giddiness.

"I suppose Catherine Brown has her hair bleached now," said the returned traveler.

"Yes," replied the stay-at-home, "but how did you know? You've been away nearly a year."

"Yes, but I thought that would be the next step; she had just begun to spell her name 'Kathryn' when I went away."

Different Methods.

"You never learned to sing or play the violin?"

"No," replied Mr. Growcher. "What's the use of going to all that trouble? Whenever I feel that the neighborhood is too quiet I get out the lawn mower."

But She Liked It.

She—You had no business to kiss me last night.

He—It wasn't business. It was pleasure.

Had His Number.

"Why, I had hardly met him, don't you know, when he called me a fool. What sort of a fellow is he?"

"Oh, he's a wise guy, all right!"

A Responsible Role.

"Don't you enjoy having summer boarders?"

"Not much," replied Mr. Corntossel. "Most of them read the comic papers. Mandy insists on my eating with my knife and saying 'b'gosh' so as to keep 'em convinced that I'm a regular farmer."

All Fixed.

"I've got great news for you," cried Jack, excitedly.

"What is it?" asked cousin Jennie.

"I'm going to marry May Prettyman."

"Pshaw! That's not news. She asked a month ago if I'd be her bridesmaid."

His Grim Joy.

"What pleasure do you derive from being a pessimist?"

"A great deal," replied Mr. Growcher. "When the worst happens I at least have the satisfaction of posing as a prophet."

Hygienic Mosquitoes.

Knicker—Were you bitten by mosquitoes?

Bocker—Bitten? Great Scott! They Fletcherized me.

Stranger—Here, I thought you said this dog I bought of you was fine for rats. Why, he won't touch them!

Dog Merchant—Well, ain't dat fine fer de rats?

TACKLES

Lady—What's your name?
New Chinese Cook—My name is Wang Hang Ho.
Lady—O, I can't remember all that, so I will call you John.
John—What is your name?
Lady—My name is Mrs. Melville Langdon.
John—Me no memble all that. I call you Tommy!

Feared Something Serious.

"My first hotel job was in a Texas city," said a hotel clerk. "One morning a guest who had been celebrating unwisely the night before, swayed up to the desk and asked for some information. His name was Colonel Hawkins, and he was the soul of politeness under all circumstances. And this morning he was looking worried.

"'Frank,' he whispered, 'my memory of last night, I regret to say, suh, is pretty hazy. Confidentially, now—what did I do?'

"'Colonel,' said I, 'you got drunk and shot a man.'

"'Anything else?'

"'Gee, isn't that about enough?'

"'It's unfortunate, yes, suh. But I was afraid I had insulted somebody.'"

Agonizing.

"He told me my operation would be absolutely painless."

"And wasn't it?"

"Naw, it cost me $100!"

A Confession.

She—No, I know nothing about golf; I don't even know which end of the caddie you use.

One Kind of Honesty.

Two piles of apples lay upon the ground. One contained a large-sized and rosy collection; the fruit of the other was green and small.

"Large at the top, sir, and small at the bottom?" inquired the new assistant to his master, as he prepared to fill the barrel.

"Certainly not!" replied the dealer virtuously. "Honesty is the best policy, my boy, and one I've always held to. Put the little apples at the top, and the large ones at the bottom."

The assistant complied. His master was evidently as green as his greenest fruit.

"Is the barrel full, my lad?" asked the farmer.

"Yes," answered the assistant.

"Good!" said the dealer. "Now turn it upside down and label it!"

A New Excuse Needed.

The Mistress—And, Mary, we'll have that small piece of meat as well.

The New Maid—Please'm, the cat's eat it.

The Mistress—What cat?

The New Maid (surprised)—Oh, lawks! Ain't there a cat?

Can He Be Joking?

She—Some one has said that the ocean never sleeps, but I'm sure it looks calm enough now to be taking a nap.

He—Yes, all except that part astern; that's awake, you know.

Excellent Reason.

Blobbs—Subbubs still believes firmly in miracles.

Slobbs—No wonder. He has had the same cook for six months.

Splendid Generosity.

Harry—You do look nice in that dress, dear, but it cost me a heap of money.

Mrs. Harry—You dear old boy! What do I care for money when it's a question of pleasing you?

What Next?

Prospective Tenant—The rooms are rather small.

Landlord—That's really an advantage. Not so much fresh air is required to keep them cool.

A Welcome Relief.

"There is one time of year when I really enjoy work."

"And when is that?"

"For two or three days after coming back from vacation."

All Escape Cut Off.

"George," said the beautiful girl, as she nestled close to him, "the last time you called, you proposed."

"I did, sweet one."

"And I accepted you."

"You did, love."

"I presume, George," she went on, in her most fascinating manner, "that you look upon me merely as a foolish, thoughtless girl, but—but——"

"How can you think so, pet?" he interrupted.

"But," she went on in a more business-like way, "I have something of the business instinct of the new woman in me, and—and—I shall have to ask you to repeat the proposal again tonight. The last time you called it was Sunday, and contracts made on that day, I learn, are not legally binding."

An Unconquerable Disposition.

"Didn't I tell you that when you met a man in hard luck you ought to greet him with a smile?" said the wise and good counsellor.

"Yes," replied the flinty souled person. "I went even further than that. I gave him the laugh."

The Amateur Gardener.

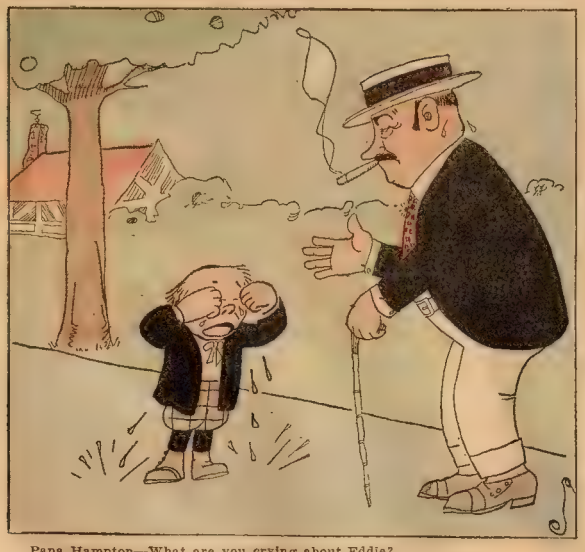
"There must be something disagreeable about gooseberries."

"Why?"

"Neighbor Awkins wants to give us some for our garden."

"How is it, Baron—do you address young ladies as 'Miss' or 'Mrs'?"

"O, that depends! If I think one is unmarried I call her 'Mrs.' and if I think she is married I call her 'Miss'—and they are all pleased."



Papa Hampton—What are you crying about Eddie?
Little Eddie—B-because Willie Smithers told the truth.
Papa Hampton—Because Willie Smithers told the truth?
Little Eddie—Y-yes. He said he would lick me, and he did.

New Charge Account Item.

"That 'live topic' printed a while ago about the druggist who got tired of letting postage stamps go on a customer's charge account was not a circumstance to an experience I had this week," another druggist said.

"One of our well-to-do customers—a woman, of course—asked me over the phone if I had change for $5. When I said 'Yes' she inquired if I could send the boy up to her home with it. The boy had errands enough already, but I did not wish to be disobliging, so I sent him.

"She opened the door for him herself and upon receiving the $5 in change smiled amiably and said, 'Tell Mr. X to charge it, please,' and sweetly bowed the boy away."

The Safe System.

He—Playing bridge for money must be an expensive pleasure.

She—No, one evening I win and the next I lose.

He—Well, why don't you play every other evening?

Mrs. Benham—Did you mail the letter I gave you this morning?

Benham—Sure.

Mrs. Benham—But it was addressed to me and would have been delivered here this afternoon.

Visitor—I understand your husband is very quiet around the house.

Hostess—It depends on whether I am talking about his relatives, or referring to a gown that I have worn for two summers.

They Had No Warning.

Two young employes of a florist in Philadelphia, who are supposed to be variously employed in the rear of the establishment while the boss looks after things in the front, were recently startled by the appearance of the "old man" while they were engrossed in a game of checkers.

The proprietor was justly indignant. "How is it," he demanded, "that I hardly ever find you fellows at work when I come out here?"

"I know," volunteered one of the youths; "it's on account of those rubber heels you insist on wearing."

Rude Man.

"The way that man looked at me was most insulting."

"Did he stare?"

"No; he looked once and then turned away as if I were not worth noticing!"

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The Sea Trailer.

(Continued from page nine.)

is more painfully sad than to see a ship, after years of service at sea, during which she sends her bows cutting the water bravely, her sails breasting gallantly aloft and her cordage crackling with the music of a harp, proud mistress of the deep—what is sadder than to see her, after that incomparable life, come to a sepulcher in foreign lands, buried in sand, crawled upon by loathsome creatures, forgotten of men, a decaying wreck.

It was one of the occasions when he found opportunity for oratory, and he was making the most of it, but prosaic Mrs. Piper, unimpressed, had been giving heed to other things.

"Somebody has been digging here," she remarked dully.

"Yes," agreed her husband, smiling indulgently. "Probably natives from some distant island, voyaging past Torrento. They would be just stupid enough to fancy something of value might be in the hulk. Doubtless this was once a merchant vessel, and later wrecked by a hurricane, but her goods would be decayed years ago. Maybe her name is known to me, though I question if it can be deciphered now. A fragment of the stern still remains upright—"

He moved forward to look, while Barron watched keenly. Piper gained the required position, whereupon the name looked him in the face—the Black Beak. Master of himself that he was he did not hide the facial betrayal of surprise and sharp feeling that fell upon him. His eyes opened wide, his jaw fell a trifle, and in his every look profound wonder. He stared blankly at the name and the name stared back—the Black Beak.

Barron saw and added measurably to his structure of suspicion. Seagulf's ship had been the Red Talon, and it had been decided that the Black Beak might well have been a sister ship. Now Piper was impressed by what he read.

The betraying emotion passed almost like a gull on rapid wing, and without a glance at any of his companions, he smiled as if amused.

"A nonsensical name!" he commented. Ship-owners have always made a mess of sea appellations. Still, what matters it what is written over a grave? The dead Black Beak knows neither past nor future as she lies here. A name? Air, and nothing more!"

Was Mr. Piper thinking of his own name, or names?

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE NIGHT STRUGGLE.

Having expressed himself to his satisfaction, Mr. Piper led his companions onward, looking here and there, and motioning and talking freely. His wife was stupidly pleased, and Miriam prudently polite.

Barron remained with the crew. Except for the casual intimation that he had left the Sweeping Broom by falling overboard Piper had not referred to his abrupt departure from the schooner, and the sailors seemed equally lacking in curiosity. They asked no questions, and his company was accepted almost as if he belonged with them.

The wounded had been conveyed to the Ursa Major, where they were receiving attention from their mates. The Virginian went among them, desirous of speech with Zorr Rogel, but that man, wounded in both head and shoulder, lay with closed eyes and was said to be unconscious. His recent conduct had made his loyalty to his former comrade doubtful, but Barron was glad to learn that, though severely injured, he was likely to live.

Mockrod was active. He had a resolute, heartening manner, and was trying hard to keep his party in hand. He spoke cheerfully in the hearing of all, but Barron noticed that he also had much to say in private to some, and once he caught part of a remark that indicated his persistent hostility to their stay on Torrento, from which it was easy to guess that he was working up an open revolt against Piper.

The revolt, if successful, would place Duke's widow in his power. With the men now loyal to her won away from their allegiance the Lieutenant would be absolute master of the island.

Piper was not long absent, and when he returned he went among the men, and smiling in friendly manner, talked freely with them. Again his remarkable faculty for impressing the average man was demonstrated. The gnarled, rough, ferocious mariners turned attentively to the suave so-called gentleman, and when his lips dripped honey they received it as if their ordinary food was not war, plunder and turbulent language. As Barron looked at it the coming to Torrento was a serious mistake, since it offered no chance for a new ship, for booty nor for a favorable base, yet Piper had led them there in opposition to Mockrod's wishes, and now he had their attention as before.

Having that attention it was easy to understand that he was working as zealously as the lieutenant to hold their allegiance.

Meanwhile he and Mockrod were polite to each other, and the breach between them lacked something of the crisis.

It was at this junctnre that Benito, the cook, came to his sometime assistant. He was solemnly amiable of manner.

"You always worked well in the galley," he said with odd directness.

"I hope so," Barron responded.

"It seems to me that a cook's good helper should be truthful."

"Perhaps he should, Benito."

"Yet, just before you died aboard the Sweeping Broom you promised me that I should inherit your watch."

"But I did not die," remonstrated Barron, smiling.

"Pardon me, but you did!" declared the little Italian. "Captain Duke decreed that you should die, and you disappeared. In spite of contradictory appearances, you died. You are a dead man now, yet I have not got your watch."

"Do you covet it greatly?"

"It keeps good time, and the picture inside the case is—ah! pretty, pretty! I always wanted it, but now more than ever. I grieve for the loss of a good assistant in the galley, and I desire the watch to remember him as he was in life. You are dead, mate, but the watch lives."

The notion of the odd little man impressed Barron, and he gained an idea. Sounding him as to his allegiance he was told that Benito cared for nothing but his pots, kettles and frying-pans, so there was no prejudice to overcome. As skillfully as possible the Virginian made a plea for the women in the party, seeking to attach him loyally to them, and especially to Miriam.

"Do this," Barron added, "and the watch shall be yours."

"I remember," answered Benito, his forehead wrinkling with deep thought, "that I once heard it said in my boyhood that men should be kind to women. No doubt you are right, and I will do as you wish."

"And you will tell me of whatever you hear that is important?"

"I will, fratello."

The Virginian eyed him narrowly and brought forth the watch.

"It is yours now," he said quietly. "I trust you, and you have called me fratello. I understand that to mean brother. Ay, we will be brothers, Benito, and faithful to each other."

"To the death!" declared the cook.

Five minutes later Barron was talking with others, but Benito was walking about with the timepiece in his pocket and his head held high.

As night drew near Miriam improved the chance to speak with Barron again. He had lingered with the freebooters, though intending to pass the night with Eli Dodd, and he met the girl eagerly. She smiled at him bravely, and he began to hope for something favorable.

"Has Mr. Piper spoken with you lately?" she asked.

"No. Why do you ask?"

"The Queen requested him to do so. There is much to encourage me. The Queen and Piper have formed an alliance, and it seems they have the greater part of the men pledged to them. Whatever mischief is in Piper's mind he will do nothing at present. His own safety depends upon keeping peace with those he can. Mockrod realises that Piper is the obstacle to his absolutet domination of the party, and he would gladly remove him. Piper knows this, so he will be friendly with all others. For a time I am free from worry."

"Will not the two factions come to open rupture?"

"I hope not."

"I echo the hope, but I have fears. I think it will be better for you if I remain in the ship tonight."

"That is just what you must not do. I fear the effect upon Piper. To be frank, I think he would like it if he were rid of his wife and he could hope to have me in her place as soon as we reach civilization. I thank you gratefully for your thought for me, but do not arouse his jealousy."

"He is a dubious protector."

"You forget the Queen. The men are hers."

Barron could argue no further, so he accepted Miriam's decision and soon left the vicinity. Nobody seemed interested in his movements, though he did not doubt that Piper saw everything that occurred.

Climbing the ridge the Virginian first visited Eli Dodd and then passed two hours roaming in the shadowy places, hoping to happen on the man who hid in the hills. Each passing hour made him the more eager to accomplish that result, for the belief was growing fixed in his mind that the elder was his father, bereft of reason, victim to the mingled misfortunes that had beset him. If this was not so what was he to believe? He saw no other theory except to believe that Clayton Barron had died when Captain Duke attacked the Ursa Major.

And if Clayton was on the island and Piper met him—what then? He found an answer in what had happened in the past.

The search was as fruitless as those that had gone before. The strange man in the tattered garments did not appear to sight, and he returned to Eli disappointed.

"Better get your sleep while you can," the sailor advised.

"I hardly dare to sleep" was Barron's gloomy reply.

"Wear yourself out and you will be worth nothing tomorrow. Do you lie down, and I'll keep watch. I can see the brigantine where I am, and if there is a disturbance I'll call you."

Knowing that it was good advice Barron accepted it and stretched himself out on his crude bed. Lying there, he naturally took up his burdens afresh. During the day there had been so much of excitement that trouble had not seemed as keen as it was, but now the spur of passing events was gone.

It was noteworthy that he first gave long thought to Miriam's peril. After that his mental attention centered about Mark Piper. Firm in the belief that the man was Seagulf, alias Jacob Gower, he felt that he had the enemy of his family close at hand, still breeding calamity, and still dangerous. Miriam had undoubtedly given the right explanation of why Piper was civil to him—he feared to create disturbance with any one else while Mockrod was a threatening figure.

What would happen if he eliminated the buccaneer lieutenant?

Barron fell asleep with the question unanswered, and several hours passed restfully. He awakened to find Eli's grasp upon his arm.

"Up!" cried the sailor. "There is a fight on the deck of the brigantine. They are at it!"

Pistol and knife were within reach, and the Virginian seized them and ran out. He could see the struggle still in progress, and he ran down the slope. Scarcely three minutes were needed for the journey, and when he neared the vessel he saw that all fighting had ended. The night was not dark, and he could distinguish various figures, but they seemed engaged in nothing more serious than angry talk.

He trod quietly forward and gained position under the counter of the ship where he could overhear, and perhaps remain unseen. Mark Piper's voice sounded calmly.

"I repeat that we must separate, for scenes like this will ruin all hands. One division shall have the Ursa Major and the other shall seek quarters where it suits them."

"I will not leave the ship!" came sharply in Mockrod's voice.

"Your ruffians are in the minority, and if I will it so you would go. However, I do not so wish it. I will lead my own party out. That I had previously decided upon. Accept the brigantine's cover, but be careful that it does not prove a curse instead of a blessing. As for the boat in which we all came here—"

"I will not give up the boat!" declared the Lieutenant fiercely.

"For a beaten man you use many strong terms. If it was my will you would give it up forever. Listen to my will as I myself interpret it. The boat remains where it is, but if you try to float it secretly and make off you will come to grief. I shall have it watched at all hours, and the man who would deprive his fellows of it will be shot dead."

"Take your threat to yourself, for I echo it."

"Excellent!" commented Piper evenly. "Be it understood that it is death to meddle with the boat. Still, I do not trust you, Mockrod, and my watch will be constant. Another thing—you are to let the Queen alone!"

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"If," said the Lieutenant sarcastically, "you have so many rules and regulations for me, why not take them to a printer and have them run off on a big press?"

"We will pass your childish language by. Now for a division of our effects, and a formal separation."

Barron had heard all of this conversation, nobody leaving the deck or looking over the bulwarks. Still lingering, he heard more. A division of food, blankets and other articles was attempted, and though it was accompanied by constant wrangling, it was finally accomplished. Having reached this stage Piper summoned his own followers, and as the Virginian heard Miriam's name called he was satisfied that no harm had befallen her.

Learning this, and being anxious to avoid discovery as a spy, he fell back into the darkness and climbed the ridge. There he found Eli feverishly awaiting him, and his story was soon told.

"When rogues fall out," commented the sailor, "there is chance for honest folks to get a show."

"Maybe so. Ah! they leave the brigantine. Piper leads his adherents. They face this way—why, they seem to be coming directly to our own refuge. I don't like that. They may make dangerous neighbors."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MAN WHO FLED.

The party moved steadily but slowly toward the ridge, while Barron and Eli continued their watch.

"What if they have selected this refuge of ours?" muttered the sailor.

"It is possible, though hardly likely. The high land is full of little alcoves like this, and they can occupy two or three near each other and have good quarters. Plainly, Piper, like ourselves, prefers the upper land to the brigantine."

"He's a wily old fellow. Notice that they bring no badly wounded except Zorr Rogel with them. He has shifted all other hurt men upon Mockrod."

"No doubt that influenced him," Barron agreed, "but there is more. Cooped up in the Ursa Major they would be in danger from the other gang. Mockrod could attack them like hemmed-in-rats, or fire the vessel. Up here they are practically safe from attack, and they can watch both the beach and the sea."

"Oh! trust that Piper to get the best position. He has a head as long as a yard-arm!"

Presently the moving party were ascending the ridge itself, and they then swung to the left and came to the level of the recess. Here they seemed to sink into the rocky surface.

"All disappear at one point," said Barron, peering out.

"That's odd. Where can they have gone to?"

"I think I see. We have found many nooks like this, but no real cave. They, however, have gone into one unless I am much mistaken. That gives me an idea!"

"What is it?"

"You once told me that this island was reputed to have been one of the many resorts of Seagulf in his days as a buccaneer. If so, why should he not know its peculiarities? Whether the place yonder is a cave or something else, he has led the way to it as direct as a dog on the scent."

"There you have it!" Eli exclaimed. "Now we know that Mr. Mark Piper is really Seagulf."

Barron made no answer. It was a strange turn of fate that had brought himself and Jacob Gower together on Torrento, and yet his avenging hand was temporarily stayed by the further strange fact that Miriam's safety was dependent upon the protection of the man she had most to dread.

"If we only had a few men to back us up," pursued Eli. "You say that one of the hands from the Royal Oak is alive?"

"Yes. Peter Hawk lives, but is too badly wounded to be considered for weeks."

"Then there is Zorr Rogel."

"Also wounded, and a dubious friend even in health. As soon as he and I were picked up by the Sweeping Broom he accepted his lot cheerfully, fraternizing gayly with the pirate crew, and from that moment he studiously shunned and ignored me. I admit that he had his personal safety to consider, but his radical change of front leads me to surmise that he did not feel grieved at enrolling himself among the buccaneers. Anyhow, he ignored me."

"Yet, you gave him the wider end of the plank when you and he were adrift in the sea, and he almost at death's door!"

"Yes"

"Hang the villain! He's as bad as Piper."

Eli meditated on his own remarks, and then abruptly added:

"What if Mr. Rogel was also a pirate in former days?"

"All things are possible at sea," the Virginian curtly replied.

He watched until daybreak without seeing more of Piper's party, though they were visible soon after. They moved about the entrance to their retreat, and smoke rose above the ridge at the same point. Beyond question they had the cover of a cave.

Barron felt that his best course was to avoid them for a while. If he went near it would be to see Miriam, and Piper would easily recognize that fact, so his jealousy would be aroused. By actual count eleven men had followed him to the cave, and it was a force too great to be dared by one person. Keeping in hiding, Barron nevertheless wrestled with a problem that was staggering in its momentous force—in what manner, then or later, was he to save Miriam from her pitiless foe?

Falling to see light he lay in the alcove, morose, miserable and nearly distracted. What could he do for Miriam?

The entire day passed uneventfully. Looking forth from the high land where their refuge was situated the Virginian could see the sea gently lifting and falling under the sunshine; he could see the dismasted hull of the Ursa Major and the scattered remnants of the Black Beak, and here and there over the island the pirates moved in careless exploration. There was neither conflict nor an exchange of words between the two factions, but both had minor quarrels among their own members, and once there was a fistic encounter on the deck of the brigantine. It required only a few days of inaction on dreary Torrento to bring forth their worst qualities, and then they were liable to make the rest of their stay a bloody nightmare.

Feeling that it was imprudent for both Eli and himself to sleep at the same time, Barron secured several hours of rest late in the afternoon. After that he was ready for action, and he did not intend to remain in the alcove like a hibernating bear.

At ten o'clock nobody was to be seen moving about outside, so the Virginian passed quietly out of his refuge. Seeing and hearing nothing of unusual nature he moved toward the cave. Even with the clew he possessed he would have failed to find it but for the fact that an armed man paced before its front.

This showed that all possible precautions were being taken there, and it stopped him short in his investigation. It was impossible secretly to see inside.

Some minutes passed and a man appeared by the sentinel, paused, spoke with him, and then walked away northward. It was Piper, and the Virginian suspected that he had designs upon his refuge; but when he followed, the man passed by without a look and still walked.

And wherever he went Barron dogged his steps quietly and skillfully.

Half a mile Piper advanced, and then the younger man suddenly lost sight of him. He seemed to fade away like a shadow. He knew that his enemy had not gone far, but the disappearance was odd. Remembering how the cave had been entered farther south he was prepared for something of the kind now, but there was delay. Growing doubtful of his judgment he dropped on his hands and knees and crept forward again, drawing near to the very point where Piper had vanished.

Then a loud, frantic, rock-hollowed cry burst upon his ears, as if some creature, human or brute, had shrieked in great terror. A moment more and a burly object rushed forth from the darkness, uttering weird sounds that were alternately roars and harsh whimperings, seemingly as its voice rose free or was broken.

Looking in the dim light like a monster for a time it presently resolved itself into human character, but it was not until its fleeing feet had taken it far away, and at a remarkable pace, that Barron suspected it to be the man who hid in the hills.

It was too late to pursue, so he crawled nearer yet to the mysterious quarter, passed a point of rock and discovered Piper standing in a small cave, a torch in his hand.

Plain view was vouchsafed, and the spy saw a changed Piper. The old, bland, smiling face was dark, bent into a scowl that made it ferocious, and the eyes gleamed fiercely brutal. Believing himself alone the man had dropped his facial mask. His real self was revealed. And with it too, was a something more that was like bitter disappointment.

In the rocky room was a bed of grass, a rude stool and ruder table. These did not seem to interest Piper, but his eyes roamed constantly, angrily, evilly. Then he strode forward, kicked over the table and stool and scattered the grass.

Next he cursed. Hot, mad words passed his lips, but only one that was more than the passionate utterance of brutal men.

"Gone!"

(Continued on page nineteen.)

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ON HIS METTLE:

Or, The Adventures of Ralph Overton

By J. M. MERRILL

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CHAPTER VIII.

RALPH PROVES HIS METTLE.

"I DO NOT know you," uttered our hero, retreating within.

Jill stood in the doorway, facing the two men.

"Call the boy out," commanded the first man, a farmer looking chap. "We want him; he has to go with us to town."

The speaker made a move to enter but was hindered by the girl blocking the way. She laughed lightly, saying:

"I can't admit strangers. You will have to wait till my brother gets back if you want anything around here."

"We want that boy—his name is Overton, and he has murdered a man," cried the farmer, flushing brick red.

"Who says he murdered a man?" demanded Jill, her brown eyes flashing. "I don't believe any such thing."

"It don't matter what you believe," retorted the man; "we have come after Ralph Overton and we mean to have him. There's a reward—"

"What do you say?" broke in the girl. "A reward for Ralph Overton?"

"That's what I said, and I'll agree to give you some of it if you'll help catch the fellow."

Jill turned a scornful eye upon the speaker. "I'd hate myself if I did," she said. "You go back home and leave this poor boy alone."

"But he's a murderer—"

"Stuff and nonsense."

"Jim, go round the back way," said the man, turning to his companion. "See that he doesn't escape that way, while I go in and nab the little villain."

The second man hastened to obey, leaving the team standing unhitched in the road. Jill still obstructed the doorway when the first farmer would have entered.

"Don't you dare touch me," warned Jill as the man laid hands on her in an effort to push her aside. "You have no right to force your way into a private house."

"I have when I am after a criminal."

"Where's your warrant?"

"Don't need any when we are chasin' a murderer," jeered the man, reddening with chagrin and anger. "If you stop me you will be liable."

"Liable?"

"Yes, liable to arrest for aiding a criminal; you will have to meet the same charge that he does. I'd hate to have such a nice girl as you be go to jail. Let me in or—"

The speaker went backward as the door was suddenly slammed in his face. He at once sprang at it, pounding lustily.

"Open!" he shouted, "open in the name of the law!"

But the door did not open. In vain he pushed and surged against the portal.

"Confound the girl!"

The fellow's anger had no effect, Jill was apparently mistress of the situation for the time being. The farmer fumed and pounded on the door, venting his wrath in words not proper in polite society. Presently a window in the attic was raised, a sandy head thrust out, a voice crying:

"Go away from here, man, or I shall use the gun on you."

It was Jill speaking, at the same time she thrust a double-barreled shotgun through the open window, aimed it toward the angry man on the front step.

"Oh, you jade—"

"Go right away now, you ugly man, or I'll shoot!"

The farmer recoiled from the step into the road.

"Put up the gun, you careless critter," called the man. "It might accidentally go off."

"Not by accident, if it goes off, Mr. Man. I'm defending my home. I'd as soon shoot as not."

A sharp click told of the drawing of the hammer of the gun. The red faded from the face of the boy-hunter.

"D-d-d-don't shoot, there's a good girl," stuttered the burly bulldozer.

"Go away then and leave a lone girl alone."

"Y-e-s-s, I'll go," and the fellow drew himself into the buggy. Wheeling his animals, he drove off down the road from whence he had come.

Meantime a crash from below stairs told the brave Jill that the second man, less cowardly than his chief, had entered the cottage by the back way.

Meantime our Ralph had gone over the lower part of the house seeking a place of concealment. Somehow he did not feel in duty bound to give himself up to the boy-chasers. He did not know them, but readily guessed they were men sent to arrest him by the authorities.

That a reward offered for his capture was being spread throughout the rural and timber districts never once entered his head. Such was the fact, however. Villaindon had telephoned in all directions; news of the murder and flight of the boy assassin had gone abroad with surprising rapidity. Every man, woman and boy throughout the Roaring Run country was deputized to seize and imprison the wild and wicked assassin of Gilbert Gragdon.

Ralph did not know all this, yet he was on the alert to any danger that immediately menaced.

He peered into the room where the wounded sheriff lay, apparently sleeping. It would not do to bother him, so the boy stole silently away. He found no convenient hiding-place. The more he debated the subject the more did he become convinced that it was cowardly in him to seek safety in flight.

He heard Jill run up the stair to the garret; then he turned to go back to the front of the house, resolved upon facing the music.

It was at this moment that he heard the back door crash open. Whirling, the pursued boy found himself face to face with a stout man in plain farmer garb.

The fellow wielded a billet of wood which he had evidently snatched from the woodpile outside.

"Ha! here you are, you young scoundrel!" exclaimed the man. "Surrender before I dash out your brains with this club!"

"All right," returned Ralph. "I am ready to go with you if you are an officer."

"Come along, then."

"When you show me your warrant, sir."

"Don't need to have any," growled the man. "You've been posted all over as a murderer; anybody has a right to take you."

"Then you haven't a warrant?"

"No, but—"

"I shan't go with you then," quickly decided our hero.

"But you gotter, or I'll smash yer head with this club."

"I guess not," defied the boy, retreating and laying hold of a pair of kitchen tongs. "Come on if you want a fight."

"Well, take it you must."

The speaker made a vicious assault with his club which Ralph cleverly dodged and swung his tongs at the same time.

A yell from the man announced that the tongs had found a mark. The big sod-buster reeled back with the blood streaming from a cut across one cheek.

"I warned you," cried the boy, who stood now at bay with his ugly tongs raised for further defense.

"You meant to murder me!" rasped the hurt man. "You are a vicious scamp, all right."

The boy and the man stood facing each other, defiance on one face, anger and malign wrath pictured on the other.

"You ought to be shot!" finally grated the man.

"Lucky for me you haven't a gun," retorted Ralph.

"You bet it is; I'd shoot yeh if I had one." The speaker spat upon hands, taking a firmer grip upon his billet of wood.

Ralph did not flinch, nor did he fear the man, armed as he was with the heavy pair of tongs.

"Are you going to surrender?" demanded the man, plainly trusting to a parley to aid him in his purpose.

"Not till I see your warrant."

"S'pose I haint got one?"

"Then you'll have to go back empty-handed."

"You'd be wise to surrender," wheedled the man. "We've got the law on our side. Yeh can't git shet of the law, my boy, no use yeh tryin'."

"I am not trying. If you have a warrant I will go with you, not without."

"Mebbe my pardner has one; he didn't tell me though. Said a murderer was running loose up ter Roaring Run and wanted me to go long and help take him."

"Well, go home and wait," said Ralph. "Tell folks you tried, but failed to get me. When I do go it will be with the sheriff. He has been hurt and it is my intention to stay by him till he is able to travel."

"And he will get the reward. I don't like that."

"Don't shoot, there's a good girl."

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"Is there a reward offered for me?" gasped the astonished boy.

"There sure is—"

"News travels fast. It is Mr. Villaindon has done this."

"Like enough, since 'twas his foreman yeh murdered."

Ralph stood debating. He had no desire to quarrel with the law, nor with lawfully appointed officials. To give himself up to irresponsible persons, however, was far from his thoughts.

"You better go about your business," warned our hero. "I shall not be taken by you or your partner. You have neither of you a right to arrest me. If you insist I shall not be to blame if you both get badly hurt.

Ralph raised his weapon and the man backed away. He had felt a touch of the boy's mettle and did not relish a repetition of what had come to him.

A girl's voice broke from the stillness behind our hero.

"Don't hurt him, Ralph. His friend has gone and he will have to return on foot. You will oblige me by getting out of this house at once, sir."

The man recoiled before the leveled fowling-piece thrust toward him by plucky Jill Tugwell.

With an angry word the boy-hunter dropped his billet of wood and backed through the door into the open air. Jill closed the door, dropped the breech of her gun to the floor with a thud, facing Ralph Overton with a smile, saying:

"Scared both of them out of their five senses—this gun hasn't had a load in it since Uncle Dan fetched it home from the Spanish War.

CHAPTER IX.

A RESCUE.

A boy walked slowly toward the river which swept on its winding course through the lower lands.

Ralph Overton had escaped from the men who essayed to capture him at the house on Grass Flats. The second man hurried away, accelerated by the pointed gun in the hands of brave Jill Tugwell.

"No, Jill, although you have been very kind to me, I cannot put you and Peg to any more trouble on my account," said our hero on his departure from the house of his friends.

"But you have no place to go; you will be taken to jail," protested the warm-hearted girl. "Wait till Peg comes anyhow."

Ralph did wait till he saw the fat boy in sight on his return from seeking a doctor, then he slipped away, turned his steps in the direction of the river, trusting to luck to bring him to a safe harbor.

Peg was not pleased when he learned from Jill of his boy friend's departure.

"He might have waited long enough to see me," said Fatty, "if he runs into any more trouble he can go it, I won't help him out again; I've done enough for that fellow."

"Now, Peg," rebuked the sister.

"Well, haven't I? And you, too, for that matter. You did a cute thing in scaring that man off with Uncle Dan's old shotgun. If they'd been officers it would have been different. I heard that a hundred dollars had been offered by Villaindon for the arrest and conviction of that boy. Ain't that a corker—for old Villaindon?"

"It's mean of him. The boy told me all about how Gragdon robbed and almost murdered him before he did a thing. Finally he rolled the man into the gulch of Roaring Run; he did it to save his own life, that's all there is to it. Ralph Overton hadn't ought to be put in danger of prison for that, had he?"

"I reckon not."

"He put on his own clothes again and was very warm in his thanks for your accommodating him with a suit of yours."

"That's all right of course. I wonder if this is the last we shall see or hear of Villaindon's chore-boy."

"We'll hear of him again if he is captured, as of course he will be, and sent to jail."

"Did he say anything more about those papers and that cross?"

"Yes, he seems very sorry for losing them."

"Maybe he thinks we took 'em."

"Oh, no, not for a minute. If you could have seen how grateful he was for the little we did for him you wouldn't say that."

When the doctor came he examined the injured sheriff and pronounced him out of danger. By nightfall he was able to sit up and partake of something to eat. The road from the Flats was comparatively free from forest and consequently had not been blockaded by the windfalls, which in the wooded districts worked havoc, blocking travel till crews of men cut the way through, occupying several days in the doing.

"I ain't sorry the little rascal escaped," said Sheriff Waldon as he sat at supper with his friends, the Tugwells.

"Then you don't think he is guilty of murder?" said Jill, pouring a second cup of tea for the official. She smiled, and was evidently pleased to hear the sheriff talk as he did.

"Not likely," with a nod of his wise head. "What little I saw of the lad convinced me that he is not vicious—besides, he saved my life."

"Yes," agreed Peg, "you'd be dead as a nit now if Ralph Overton hadn't rolled that log off'n your breast; he did it while handcuffed too."

The speaker's face glowed, and his big, round gray eyes shone like stars.

Waldon's cheek reddened; he seemed ashamed of the handcuffing.

"A mere kid," he muttered. "I was a mean fool to do it."

"Did your warrant call for that—handcuffs?" queried Peg.

"Warrant! Good land, boy, I didn't have one."

"Then, why—"

"There wasn't time," explained the sheriff hurriedly. "I was on the road when I got wind of the telephone message from Villaindon asking for the arrest of Ralph Overton for the murder of his foreman. I drove quickly up toward the Run and captured the boy coming down. After that came the wind."

Meantime Ralph Overton pursued his way across the fields till he reached the bank of Roaring Run, at least a mile below the canyon through which its roaring waters plunged in foaming anger to the level country below.

Somewhere down this stream he knew the body of the wicked foreman of Hardridge Camp floated, a victim to his own covetousness.

Our hero was beyond sight of the Tugwell cottage when he reached the river bank. Here was a pleasant spot where the June grass, now dying in the hot sun of later summer, had been unnipped by kine.

The boy sat down to meditate and take stock of the situation.

The roar of the canyon filled the air. Bits of jagged rock flurried the surface of the stream here and there, and the rush of the narrow river between steep banks was something considerable.

The sound of a human voice raised in a shout came from up the stream.

Ralph forgot his own troubles when he saw, borne swiftly down the stream, an overturned canoe, to the bottom of which clung a man.

The fellow was thoroughly wet, hatless, and apparently half dead with his recently passed fright and exposure.

It was this man's shout for help that had met the ear of our young hero.

Ralph at once decided on a course of action. Near to his position a tree, partly uprooted by the late tornado, hung far out over the swift water, its branches thrashing up and down in the current. The roots of the tree seemed almost ready to pull loose from the shore, yet our hero did not hesitate to spring upon the trunk and go, hand over hand, out over the water.

He felt his footing tremble and wave about, threatening at any moment to fall into the wild waters. The quick eye of the boy discerned that the course of the canoe would take it directly beneath the extreme top of the tree.

Carefully, yet swiftly, the lad crawled along the swaying trunk till the extreme end was reached.

"Steady now, sir," called the boy, bracing himself for the supreme effort.

The man seemed too dazed, else too weak, to pay heed to outward sounds. Ralph bent low as the current swept the canoe under the tree, grasped the coat-collar of the wrecked boatman, pulled with all his boy might, tearing the man from his perch, landing him among the branches of the tree.

It was not without considerable danger to himself that the boy half dragged, half carried the wrecked one to the grassy bank. Here he deposited his find in an easy position under a thorn tree.

"Why, it's Mr. Villaindon!"

The ejaculation came from Ralph, evincing genuine surprise.

"Yes, it's I, all right," faintly agreed the timber owner. "I feel so weak I can't half thank you. I couldn't have hung on a minute longer. Good boy you are, a mighty good boy."

Villaindon groaned as he sat up, hatless, presenting a pitiable sight.

"You—you saved my life, boy."

"I am glad that I happened along as I did, sir."

The rescued man sat for some time watching every movement of the boy who had been so persecuted through his orders. Ralph no doubt thought of this while rubbing the stiffened fingers, wringing out his wet clothing and otherwise administering to the welfare of his enemy.

"I feel all right now," said the timberman, standing upon his feet, shaking himself vigorously.

"You have lost your hat, sir. Take mine till you can do better."

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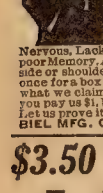

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hadn't the gall to accept the loan of Ralph's head-piece.

"Keep your hat, my lad," commanded Villaindon. "I can get along till I reach town. It can't be far to the Tugwell cottage."

"Not far from a mile, sir."

"I will go there and have the fat boy convey me to town in his buckboard. Will you go along?"

"Thank you, sir, but I prefer to go on my way alone."

The rich man stood regarding the lad thoughtfully for a full minute. When Ralph signified his intention of going on his way, Villaindon stepped quickly to his side and grasped his hand, saying while a moist light gathered in his eyes:

"I have been harsh with you, my boy. I ask your forgiveness."

"That's all right, sir, providing you will believe me when I tell you that I did not really intend to harm Mr. Gragdon when, in my anger, I gave him that push over the brink of Roaring Run.

"I believe you, my son, I believe you," declared the man heartily, still holding fast to the boy's hand.

"Then I am free to go wherever I please, sir?"

"No, I will not have it that way. I want you to go home with me, to work in my garden, do odd jobs in town. I have been too hard on you, I see that now. I feel very grateful for your saving my life. I won't take no for an answer."

"You are very kind, sir—"

"Kind!" with a snort and still harder pressure of the hand. "My goodness, Ralph Overton, you are altogether too modest. What say, will you—come and live with me at Bay Haven?"

"Why, yes, if——"

"There must be no 'ifs' about it. I want a decisive answer."

"How about this charge against me—of your foreman's death—"

"That is dropped."

"Thank you, sir," said Ralph. "I will come to your place in town tomorrow."

"Come now to Tugwells with me. I'm afraid you distrust me and won't come at all."

"Oh, yes, I will. But I must have time to think. Good day, Mr. Villaindon. I will surely be on hand tomorrow night."

With that Ralph Overton pulled his hand free and hurried from the spot.

CHAPTER X.
IN THE CITY.

According to agreement our hero, soon after reaching Bay Haven, wended his steps toward the better part of the lake city and was not long in finding the somewhat pretentious home of Richard Villaindon.

A boy met him at the side gate and asked his business.

"Want to see my uncle, eh?" said the boy, whose fiery red hair and turn-up nose were not inviting of confidence.

"Yes," assured Ralph, "I should like to see him. Is he at home?"

"I reckon he is, but not to tramp boys."

The speaker laughed and fan a supercilious eye over the plain, even patched clothes of the boy caller.

A bit of red shot into young Overton's cheek as he said:. "I am not a tramp. I am here by invitation from Mr. Villaindon himself. I shall be obliged to you if you will show me to your uncle, or better yet, tell him I am here."

"He didn't tell me he was expecting such august company. Maybe he would have sent his courtiers to greet you had he known at what hour you would arrive."

The mockery in the speaker's voice angered our hero.

"Mr. Villaindon certainly has a very impudent young cub for a nephew. If I work about here there's one thing certain, you'll have to keep away from me or there'll be something doing."

Ralph turned to walk away.

"Hold on there, you!" sharply called the red-eyed boy. "I don't take no sass from kids like you."

"You'll have to unless you speak as you ought."

Again Ralph halted and turned about. The red-headed boy came forward, shaking his clinched hands, looking very fierce. Our hero did not quail. His late experiences in the woods had hardened his muscles and given him self-confidence. He felt very much elated that he had won the confidence of the rich timberman, and that he was to be taken into his immediate employ. As for this upstart of a nephew he felt that he should be able to manage him in case trouble came.

"I don't believe Uncle Dick ever asked you to call here," snarled the big snub-nosed boy. "I've a mind to black you eye."

"Better think twice before you try that," suggested our hero.

"Who be you," anyhow? What's your name, sissy?"

"It isn't Redhead, anyhow," jeered Ralph.

"You little drab skunk!"

"Hold on!" cried Ralph as the other came at him, striking savagely. "Who are you? No nephew of Villaindon's I'll be bound. He would be a gentleman—"

"I am his nephew; my name is Enoch Barnaby, and I ask no odds of a tramp like you."

While the boys were disputing a man came down one of the walks leading from the house, and approached, opening a small iron gate as he advanced. This proved to be no one but the proprietor himself.

"Good morning, Ralph," said the big man. "What seems to be the trouble between you and my nephew? Are you quarreling?"

"I have tried not to quarrel, sir," began our hero, only to be interrupted by the nephew crying:

"This impudent tramp insulted me. He said you was an old duffer besides. He could take his sass against me, but when he said you was a duffer I went at it to give him a licking, which I should have done if you hadn't come up as you did."

A most veracious statement indeed! Ralph could only gasp at the lie and hold his tongue.

"Ralph, I am sorry to hear this of you," say the rich man.

"I think you might hear much worse of me if you allow that fellow to tell it," returned the chore-boy.

"Don't you dare call me a liar!"

Enoch doubled his fists and advanced threateningly. Ralph stood his ground. Mr. Villaindon touched the arm of his bellicose nephew, saying: "There, that will do, Enoch. You both need reprimanding. Come with me, Ralph, I will talk with you by ourselves. As for you, Enoch, you go about your business, I'll settle with you later."

There was a stern ring in the man's voice that was not pleasant to the ear.

Enoch Barnaby grimaced behind our hero's back and shook a threatening fist.

"I'll get even with you some day, see if I don't," he growled.

Arrived in a room off the main hall of the big house, the timberman asked the boy to be seated.

"I looked for you yesterday," said the rich man, sitting down opposite the lad, producing and lighting a cigar. "Do you smoke?"

"Thank you, no."

"Good, that is as it should be. You are a nice boy; not much like my nephew, who both smokes and chews."

"I should think it would make him sick," ventured Ralph, not knowing what else to offer.

"It did at first, but like most boys he persevered, determined to be manly," and the rich man laughed.

"It seems anything but manly to me," said Ralph.

"You are right, my boy; there is nothing manly about it. Enoch is an impudent cub; I have all I can do to manage him. I wanted to send him to the woods, but his mother objected. You see, my sister lives with me and keeps my house. Because of her I have put up with Enoch. Mothers are very partial to sons, no matter how disagreeable they are. You won't need to see much of Enoch, though."

"There'll be no trouble between us, sir, unless he makes it," avowed Ralph.

"Quite right."

The great man sat in deep thought while he smoked and regarded the face of his young caller. Ralph felt uneasy under that pair of reading eyes.

"I hope, sir," he began "that you will set me to work right off."

"Yes, tomorrow at the furthest. You may look about for the rest of the day and report at night. By the way, how is it about that St. Glebe Cross—have you found it?"

"Have I found it? No; it must have been stolen. There were papers, too—"

"Oh, yes, I know about them—"

"Oh, sir, then you found the papers," cried Ralph, his face lighting up with sudden joy.

"Oh, no, I did not find them. They could be nothing to me, anyhow. The cross, however, is a bird of different feather. I should like to see that. You know nothing of its whereabouts?"

"Nothing."

"Where did you lose it—and the papers?"

"I think you asked all this before, Mr. Villaindon—"

"Oh, to be sure. Never mind now. The cross and papers are really nothing to me; just a bit of bus that's all."

The man got up and paced the floor. He seemed not only thoughtful, but ill at ease. At length he said:

"It's strange about Gragdon."

"How do you mean?"

"He hasn't been found."

Ralph felt chilled. His part in the disappearance of the tough foreman still troubled him. It was cruel in Villaindon to bring that up now.

"You have dropped that—the charge against me haven't you, Mr. Villaindon?" finally questioned the perturbed boy.

"Why, yes, so far as I am concerned," said the rich man. "I owe you my life my boy, and can't feel too grateful."

"I did not mean in that way, sir," spoke the orphan lad quickly. "What I did for you was a matter entirely outside of my guilt in this other instance. My saving your life could not make me innocent, if that was all—"

"Yes, yes, of course," broke in the timberman. "I understand all you would say, my boy. You are very modest, yet a hero, nevertheless. There'll be no further trouble if you stop right here and keep a still tongue in your head."

With this Ralph was of necessity forced to be satisfied.

The timberman laid out work for his boy helper of a nature that was very satisfactory to our hero. Part of this was to go at the call of Mrs. Barnaby, a rather coarsed-grained woman, Villaindon's housekeeper and Enoch's mother.

Ralph soon found that his work was to be no child's play. He was sent to all parts of the town on various errands for the housekeeper.

For the first few days the boy was ever on the lookout, fearing arrest. This feeling wore off as the days passed, and Ralph began to like his duties much better than those imposed on him while acting as shanty chore-boy.

The lad came, after a time, to be convinced that it was all the evil foreman's doings, the trouble he had experienced while at the timber shanties.

He saw little of Mr. Villaindon, the timber dealer being absent, on business bent, the greater share of the time. Enoch avoided the new boy, and for a while the two boys did not come into collision.

During the first few weeks of his stay Ralph saw nothing of the Tugwells. He heard, however, that the sheriff recovered fully from his hurts and was again on duty at the county building.

During all the time not a word from or about the foreman who had met a shocking fate in the broil of Roaring Run waters.

Ralph felt many qualms of conscience when he reflected on that last encounter between Gragdon and himself. There could be no question but the man deserved his fate, and yet our hero was not quite at ease because of his part in the evil man's taking off.

One day Ralph had an adventure that set him to thinking.

He was coming out of a store with a basket of fruit destined for Mrs. Barnaby on his arm when he saw a man miss his footing as he was alighting from a street car, and fall.

Our hero dropped his basket and darted to the rescue.

He proved to be in time to draw the passenger from a terrible death beneath the wheels of the car.

The man stood up, brushing the dirt from his rather shabby clothing, while he pierced his boy rescuer with very curious eyes.

"My, what a likeness!" exclaimed the man.

Ralph and the man walked to where the boy's basket lay, half emptied of its contents. The two busied themselves in replacing the fruit in the basket.

With one hand on the boy's shoulder the stranger drew out his wallet.

CHAPTER XI.
STRANGE MR. GODFREY.

Ralph shook his head and turned away with flushed cheek. The idea of the stranger offering him money for an act of duty annoyed and displeased him.

The man at once saw his mistake and returned his wallet to his pocket.

"I'd like to do something for you, my lad," said he earnestly. "You saved my life, miserable life though it be."

"Thank your, sir, but there is nothing that I could take for that," returned our hero quickly.

"Where do you live?"

"Up here a ways."

Man and boy walked along in company.

"May I know your name?" finally asked the stranger.

"Ralph Overton, sir."

The man stopped and regarded the lad keenly.

"Overton—Overton," he said. "That name seems familiar. Do your parents live near?"

"I have none," responded Ralph, who was anxious to throw off his companion. The two, however, continued to walk along in company.

"I must go in here," suddenly cried the boy, turning into a meat market.

When Ralph came out the stranger whose life he had saved was still waiting. This did not please our boy hero, yet he was too polite to speak his mind.

"I will accompany you home," said the man.

"Did you not hear me say I have no home," cried Ralph, stopping quickly.

"Oh, but you live somewhere," quickly returned the stranger. "I am interested

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in you and am going to learn more of your history."

"My history isn't much," said Ralph, thinking of the life he had led in the county house, his short experience afterward in the lumber woods. "If it is all the same to you I would rather not take you to the Villaindons'—"

"Villaindon!" ejaculated the man. "And does he live hereabouts?"

The face of the speaker underwent a great change. His hands becam suddenly clinched, his face becoming white and agitated.

"Yes," confided the boy. "Didn't you ever hear of him before?"

"Of Villaindon?"

"Yes, of Richard Villaindon?"

"Heard of him? I should say so!" articulated the stranger chokingly. "He has much to answer for; but as for his living here in Bay Haven, I had not suspected it. And you tell me you are a member of that man's household?"

"For the present I am;" admitted Ralph, wondering at the emotion exhibited by his companion. He found himself very much interested, and was not so anxious as at the outset to cast him aside.

There was something in the stranger's voice and mien that, despite his seedy garments, proclaimed a gentle breeding. Our hero, however, fought against any warmth of feeling, since he fought shy of strangers since his sad experience in the lumber woods.

"What sort of a man have you found him, my boy?"

The man faced Ralph now, with his hand against his shoulder, his eyes filled with stirring gleams.

"I won't say anything against him," returned our hero. Villaindon was using him squarely at present; he therefore could not conscientiously speak ill of one who gave him employment even though in his heart he knew that the man in question was not above petty meanness.

"I suppose not."

When the boy would have proceeded on his way the stranger held him by the arm, protesting.

"I haven't said half I wish to," he explained. "I am glad I met you, my boy. I am on Villaindon's trail. He is a bad man and you must be chary of trusting him too far. Could I see you some day and talk all I please? Oh, if that man has dared! But, you cannot understand."

"What is your trouble, sir?" asked our hero, who was now thoroughly interested in the stranger. He seemed to know his employer, and to be his enemy. Ralph had a streak of curiosity in his makeup as has any intelligent young American.

"My troubles are many; he is at the bottom of them." The speaker tapped his forehead with one long index finger. "Ever hear of Ethan Godfrey?"

"No," said Ralph, "I never did."

"It wouldn't be likely you would. He would be the last man to mention my name. Do you think I should find your employer at home today?"

"Not today, Mr. Godfrey. He is out of town."

"Oh, very well. It doesn't much matter," assented the man. "I will call when he is at home. I have a reckoning to make with him, my lad, one that will create a scandal perhaps. Ah, my poor brain. I am not quite sound in the upper story even yet, due entirely to that man's villainy. He is bad with a big B, that's why I ask you to look out how far you trust him."

Ethan Godfrey was crazy. This was the sudden conclusion arrived at by our boy hero. Believing him thus he was more anxious than ever to be rid of him.

"That's all right," agreed the lad drawing away from the man's detaining hand. "I will see you some other time, now I must hurry home with this stuff, so please excuse me."

"Just a moment," pleaded the man.

Ralpt waited, nodding a hesitating consent.

"You go about Villaindon's house at will I suppose?"

"I haven't been ordered to stay in any one spot, sir."

"Good. Keep your eyes and ears open and reporrt to me."

"Report to you about what?' I don't think—"

"About many things; about the Cross of St. Glebe."

"The Cross of St. Glebe!" exclaimed the astonished lad. "What do you know about that, which was once my mother's treasure? Sir, sir—Mr. Godfrey, did you know my mother?"

"Your mother," muttered Godfrey, passing a hand over his brow in a hesitating manner. "Do I know her—an Overton? Yes, surely she was an Overton; but, but there's a blank which I can't fathom. Oh, if this dark shadow would only go from me I might do something. Now, now, alas! I am all at sea. Stay a moment, Ralph, stay and hear me. I must see and talk with you again. Come down to Pastor's restaurant tomorrow evening. I will meet you there and we will talk this all over. I may be able to tell about your mother, about the cross. You won't fail me, boy; will you come?"

There was a staggering eagerness in the words that arrested and compelled Ralph to hear and to heed.

"Yes, Mr. Godfrey, I will come," said Ralph, after which he turned away and hurried his steps homeward.

Mrs. Barnaby was unusually cross this day. She lectured Ralph for his long absence and sent him to the stables to do the work there which rightfully belonged to her son to perform.

"I don't take no impudence from pigs like you!"

Ralph halted suddenly, just outside the stable door. The sound of voices raised in angry dispute met his ear. The first bit of palaver fell, he knew, from the lips of Enoch Barnaby.

"I'll knock your block off, if you ain't careful. Tell me where to find Ralph Overton this minute. I know he is here—"

"You are a liar——"

Simultaneously came the sound of fists coming in contact, followed by a sharp scuffle.

Ralph hurried inside to see two boys engaged in a sharp contest for the mastery. Before he could interfere one of them went to the floor with a bleeding nose. It was then that our hero recognized Peg Tugwell in the victor, who turned toward him, sending out a warm hand-clasp in greeting.

"What's the trouble?" asked Ralph.

"No trouble at all," chuckled the fat boy of Grass Flats. "This geezer undertook to learn me manners and I thumped his slats. I came over on purpose to see you, Ralph."

"I'm glad you came," and the two lads were soon on the most friendly terms. The floored boy got upon his feet and walked away, wiping the blood from his nose muttering threats of vengeance.

"Let him go," laughed Fatty. He'll be more respectable after this I reckon. I simply asked him a civil question and he snapped me up as short as though he was a ticket seller for a railroad. I tapped his ugly nose for him which may learn him something. If it doesn't I ain't to blame."

"No," agreed Ralph, "I don't think you are. You wished to see me?"

"Yes. Got you a good job."

"I am sorry you went to all this trouble, Peg. I have a job here now and of course can't leave for another. I am just as much obliged though as I would be if I could accept."

"I heard you were here in the employ of old Villaindon. I couldn't believe it at first. That a man who tried to send you to prison would hire you to work for him seems a lot strange, doesn't it?"

"Yes, so I thought at first."

"But now?"

"I think I did the man a wrong. He has been very good to me since I pulled him out of the river the day after that big wind, when, because the road for a long distance was filled with trees, he took to the river in a canoe, in order to get through."

"You saved his life, Ralph."

"I suppose I did. Anybody would have done the same. I'd save my worst enemy from death by fire or drowning if I had the chance, Peg. Wouldn't you?"

"I don't know," and the fat boy shook his head. "I'm afraid I am not a good chap like you are, Ralph. I hate my enemies and am apt to despitefully use them. But say, come hoime with me won't you?"

"It's as I told you, Peg."

"Oh, all right. I'll call on you again next week," and the fat boy walked from the stable while Ralph went about his duties.

On the following afternoon Mrs. Barnaby sent her chore-boy into the attic after something she apparently greatly needed. Finding it, Ralph turned to descend to find the door securely locked, while from beyond its portal rang a jeering laugh from the lips of Enoch Barnaby.

The continuation of this interesting story will be found in the Ledger issue of next week. If you are not a regular subscriber to the Ledger we would like to have your name on our list. The Ledger is only $1.00 per year and we have stories awaiting publication that you cannot afford to miss.

Sewing Hindus.

Hindu boys have to learn to sew. When they are grown men they must do all the sewing for the family if it is a poor family, and poor men are hired to do the sewing for the rich families.

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Little Stories

Walks While He Talks.

Senator Martine of New Jersey, who highly entertained the Senate by his impromptu speeches in which the procedure of the Senate, ordinarily respected, was thrown to the winds, walks as he orates. Usually a Senator addressing the Senate or in interrupting a Senator stands by his seat, moving but little from it in the excitement of his inspiration. But Martine cannot maintain himself thus. He must walk rapidly and for some distance as he talks, much after the manner when he used to "cradle" his New Jersey farm, as he says. So Martine is a circus to see as well as to listen to when he feels he must enlighten some Senator who professes to know more about farming than he.

And he accepts the fun with good grace.

"Why do you walk so?" Senator Daily asked him.

"I cannot help it," replied Martine. "My tongue and legs move at the same time. Some reflex action somewhere. I have been reproved for this on the stump by an Irishman. Finding me at it as I am, he shouted:

"'Say, are you walking or are you talking? If you are walking, then walk; if you are talking, then talk. We can't hear you when you walk and we cannot see you when you talk. Quit one or both.'

"But here I am. I never have been cured."

Mistress—Didn't a package come for me, Jane?

Jane—No, ma'am. A package came for "C. O. D.," but there's no one here of that name.

Patrick Was Twisted.

Dr. Musser was talking about persons who come to the hospital hurt, some with slight pains, but who think they are dying. The doctor related the following story:

"A short time ago an Irishman and his wife were asleep in bed when the wife thought she heard a noise downstairs, which she imagined was burglars, and, awakening her husband, she said: 'Wake up, Pat, there are burglars downstairs.'

"So Pat arose and hastily dressed himself. But in dressing he put his trousers on backward. Quickly grabbing a lamp he started down the stairs, but owing to the trousers being tight, he reached the first step and tripped. He fell down the whole flight.

"His wife heard the racket and went to the top of the stairs.

"Are you hurt?" she asked.

"Pat arose, and feeling himself to ascertain if he was hurt, found the way he wore his trousers.

"No, darlin', I'm not hurt in the least. But I gave my body one dickens of a twist."

Making Conversation.

Irving Batcheller, in the course of a lecture at Witherspoon Hall, recently, told a story of a farmer on the Connecticut hills.

"Pretty steep land for planting, isn't it?" a visitor asked the tiller of the soil.

"Pretty steep," the farmer assented.

"I suppose it's quite difficult to plant your corn."

"Quite difficult," came the echo.

The visitor was interested, and would not be put off with short replies.

"Eh—how do you manage to plant on this hill?" he persisted.

The farmer gazed at him pityingly.

"We have to shoot it all into the earth with shotguns, stranger," he assured his guest, puffing solemnly at his pipe in the pauses of his reply.

The visitor gasped. "Really?" he ejaculated. "Really now? Is that actually true?"

"No, that isn't true," he answered, "I'm trying to make conversation."

Cholly Lighthed—Do you think you could be comfortable on $10,000 a year?

Miss Highup—Yes, I believe I could, if the people next door hadn't more than $9,000 a year.

Common Fairness.

A special writer had been asked by a magazine editor to do a short article for him, and a country cousin of the free lance was visiting him at the time. The free lance sat down that evening, turned off the article, and in company with his cousin, went to the magazine office the next day to deliver the article personally, as the editor was in a hurry for it. While they were there the editor asked the writer how much he wanted for it.

"Oh, say $100," was the answer.

"All right," said the editor. "Do you mind taking this order down to the cashier's window and getting your check?"

The free lance took the order and stepped out of the office, leaving his cousin with the editor. Before the editor could make some commonplace remark by way of conversation, the cousin leaned over and said, mysteriously:

"Say! He's my cousin, an' all that—but I believe in honesty. That feller's skinnin' you proper. It didn't take him mor'n two hours to write that thing. I was right there an' saw him doin' it. He didn't put in more'n fifty cents worth o' time on it, and I don't believe I'd ought to incourage him in such a course o' dishonesty by keepin' still when I see him bunko you."

Joke at Sugar Hearing.

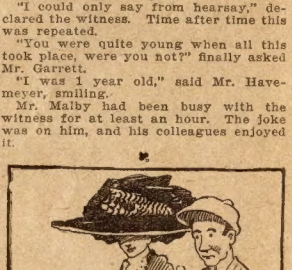
A most amusing thing happened while Horace Havemeyer, who is 25 years old, was on the stand at the recent sugar hearing. He had tried to give an answer to every question asked, but Representative Malby, forgetting the age of the witness, questioned him in elaborate detail about something that took place twenty-four years ago.

"I could only say from hearsay," declared the witness. Time after time this was repeated.

"You were quite young when all this took place, were you not?" finally asked Mr. Garrett.

"I was 1 year old," said Mr. Havemeyer, smiling.

Mr. Malby had been busy with the witness for at least an hour. The joke was on him, and his colleagues enjoyed it.



Mr. Piffin—This beast should have been called a clock dog instead of a watch.

Mrs. Piffin—Why?

Mr. Piffin—When he broke the chain didn't he run for eight days!

If a girl has pretty hands she can afford to dispense with gloves.

The Sea Trailer

(Continued from page thirteen.)

He said it like a plunging bullet, and then gazed toward the exit. Barron, eager to witness all, kept his place, but he was unseen. No doubt Piper remembered the man he had frightened away and longed to see him again and wrest some explanation from him, but the man was gone.

The cave was about the size of an ordinary room. After a little delay Piper moved again and made the rounds of the place, holding his torch high and peering as if he hoped that a recess was there in which he could find what was wanted. He was disappointed, and he finally wheeled abruptly.

"Let it go!" he growled. "I have enough already. I wonder who that crazy fellow was?"

Flinging the torch aside he passed out, walking within twenty feet of the spot to which Barron had fallen back. He set his face toward the quarters of his party, and satisfied that he would return there, the watcher did not follow. Instead, he, too, soon entered the cave.

It was an object of keen interest to him. He had, at last, found the obscure hiding-place of the mysterious dweller on Torrento, and he had learned something besides.

The island treasures, though missing, assumed important dimensions. Piper aspired to find it—of that he was convinced, for the words he had spoken seemed to open to no other interpretation. Barron believed he now new why that man had favored coming to Torrento. Either to share the treasure with the surviving pirates, or merely to make sure it was there, he had advocated the latest move of the freebooters.

How had he gained knowledge of its presence in that remote region? It was something that report said Seagulf made Torrento one of his resorts in olden times.

The Virginian lingered long in the cave. There the strange man had lived. There was his bed, his stool, his table; there he had shrunk away when Barron and Eli hunted. It was a home fit for a hermit or a lunatic.

After a time Barron went outside and secreted himself, planning to wait and see if the unknown would return. His watch was persistent, but when daylight struggled out of the night's grasp the solitude of the immediate vicinity remained unbroken. The hider had not come. Barron went for breakfast and satisfied himself that the rival parties of freebooters were quiet, and then walked the ridge for hours intent upon his quest. He returned at eleven o'clock, ready, at last, to admit that the hider knew too many nooks on Torrento for an ordinary man to effect discovery of him.

The day was mainly uneventful. Both Piper's and Mockrod's men were visible around their respective quarters, though some of them roamed the hills restlessly, at times. There was no sign of violent intentions, but their peaceable manner impressed the Virginian as suspicious. Riotous conduct and quarrels were to be expected. What held them in check?

Several times Barron saw Miriam outside the cave, but when he would have joined her she motioned him back with gestures so emphatic and hasty that he dared not, for her safety, disobey.

The falling of another night found him restless and nervous. The gloom affected his spirits and he feared greatly for the girl. He rebelled against her directions, as expressed by signs, and was tempted to invade the cave boldly. He even contemplated making an effort to carry her away by a hazardous dash into their retreat, but wavered and finally sought Eli for fresh consultation.

As they talked there was a sound at the entrance to their alcove, and as they turned to look a man entered crawling upon his hands and knees, weakly, slowly, painfully. He half-raised his pallid face, showing himself to be Zorr Rogel. Then he fell fainting to the rocky floor.

This strange story leads to very extraordinary situations and dramatic episodes. The reader will find it eminently worth reading to the end. Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of it. The surest way to get the Ledger is to subscribe for it and have it come to your home regularly. Today is a good time to attend to this.

On the Defensive.

A distinguished novelist recently found himself traveling in a train with two very talkative women. Having recognized him from his published portraits, they opened fire upon him in a manner which was unendurable to the sensitive author.

Presently the train entered a tunnel, and in the darkness the novelist raised the back of his hand to his lips and kissed it soundly. When light returned he found the two women regarding each other in icy silence.

Addressing them with great suavity, he said: "Ah, ladies, the one regret of my life will be that I shall never know which one of you it was that kissed me!"

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7091—House Gown or Wrapper, 34 to 44 bust. For the medium size will be required 8 yards of material 27, 5 yards 36 or 4⅝ yards 44 inches wide, the width of the skirt at lower edge is 3 yards for the walking length.

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FOR YOUTHFUL EYES

RISING TIME.

It's morning time. Oh, deary!
I'm feeling very weary
Whene'er it's time to think of getting up,
But breakfast now is ready;
So bring in little Teddy,
And be careful not to stumble o'er the pup.

Pride.

Charlie was a ragged boy and careless and dirty. No one blamed him greatly. He had not much encouragement at home. His father drank and his mother was, at best, not "ambitious." Charlie and two little sisters were left pretty much to themselves. The boy sold papers sometimes and once in a while he picked up an odd job, but the trifles he earned were quickly spent.

Yet there was one thing to Charlie's credit; he couldn't stand having fun made of him. A boy that called him "raggy" had either to fight or run. Charlie was quick-tempered and, in spite of bad conditions, he did have some pride. It was this, perhaps, that saved him.

The boy who tormented him most had a good home and was a successful business fellow. In a way he was a competitor of Charlie and outdid him at every turn. In their last squabble he had called Charlie a ragged beggar and had shouted, "Don't you try to sell papers to my customers any more."

The challenge struck home. Charlie resolved then and there to change things. He first cleaned himself up, cut the tattered edges off of his ragged clothes, got his mother to take a few stitches, and set out in earnest to sell papers.

At the end of two weeks he was handling nearly as many as his business rival. It had been hard work to keep out of a fight, but when he was taunted he put his hand in his pocket, rattled the pennies and called out, "Never you mind. I'm sawing wood."

Just about that time he saw an advertisement asking for a boy to sell weekly papers and build up a new business.

"This is my chance," he said to himself. Ordering some samples, he went into business in dead earnest. He visited the offices, the factories, the stores, and finally the houses. Every week he turned over his capital, added something to it and extended his business. By the end of two months he had bought and paid for some new clothes. The pennies that used to rattle in the pocket of his old trousers had now, by a delightful bit of magic, turned into dimes and quarters. His rival no longer called him "Rags." Instead it was, "Hello, Charlie, how's business?"

"Fine," Charlie would answer. "Growing every day. I have four fellows helping me now. I give them most of the profit on the business they get and keep the rest myself."

This was not exactly a boast. It was a fact. The pride that Charlie felt in his success was not a foolish pride. He had worked hard and really deserved it.

"Say, Charlie, I-I-think I could get some folks to buy that paper, too," said the rival one day.

Do you think Charlie turned him down? Not a bit of it. He did not need to. The other way was more fun. After all it was the fellow's taunt that really had turned Charlie about and was then putting money into his pocket, and so the two went into partnership.

Too Many Cooks.

The little princess was ill and all the court was worried. Great, wise doctors came and looked at her and the princess tried to make up her mind which she liked best. Altogether, she had fourteen doctors. Some were old, some young, some grave and some gay, but, on the whole, the little princess decided she liked old Dr. Wise the best.

When Dr. Wise came in he saw fifteen court ladies clustering about the little princess.

"Who is taking care of the princess?" he said.

"We are all taking care of the princess," they cried.

"Humph!" said Dr. Wise. Do you know how to take care of children?"

Then certain of the ladies grew indignant and told the doctor that they had gold framed certificates showing how much they had learned about doctoring and nursing.

"Where is the good old nurse that used to take care of the princess when she was a tiny child?" asked Dr. Wise.

"Oh, we sent her away!" exclaimed the ladies. "Her ideas were so old-fashioned."

"I want her back!" cried the little princess.

"And you shall have her back," said Dr. Wise. "The good nurse must have sole charge of the princess. Give the princess a little quiet and some good, simple broth and she will soon be well."

The ladies murmured at this, but no one dared disobey Dr. Wise, and so they all ran down to the kitchen to prepare the broth. When the broth was cooking on the stove one of the ladies put in plenty of pepper. "For," said she, "pepper is the best thing for invalids." Another put in plenty of salt, because she had read somewhere that salt was good for something—she did not remember just what. Another put in various other flavorings, and all the others added their own contributions, so that when it was finished you would never have known it was meant for broth.

When it was brought to the little princess she took one taste and turned away. "I can't eat it," she said.

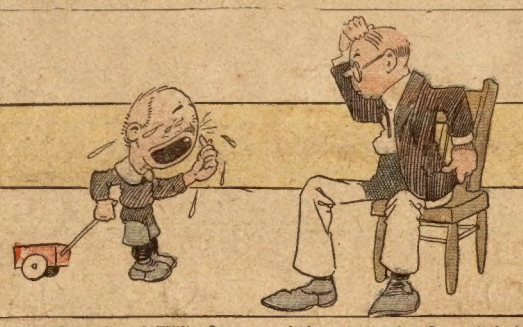
Then Dr. Wise turned to the old nurse, who was back with the princess, and he said, "Can you make broth?"

"I have made broth all my life," said the nurse.

"Then will you make some for the princess?" said the doctor.

So the old nurse went down to the kitchen and soon came back with a cup of broth. When the princess tasted it she said, "That is the kind of broth I like!"

So it happend that after a few days of careful nursing the little princess was well again, and after that the old nurse was never again sent away from the little princess.



Little Joey—Oo-oo! Willie Jones punched my nose when I wasn't looking.
Pa—What? Where were your eyes?
Little Joey—He told me to close them a minute.

Miss Piper.

An empty spool, three or four Japanese paper napkins and a clay pipe will, when properly arranged, make jolly Miss Piper Doll. Lay two napkins together; cut a circle in the center large enough to put the pipe stem through, and fasten the neck to the bowl, tying tightly with a string. Put the mouth piece of the pipe into a large spool that the doll may have a foundation upon which to stand securely. With a brush or pencil mark a face on the bowl of the pipe, leaving the bump for a nose. Fold another napkin three cornerwise and lay it over the doll's head to form a sort of hood and shawl, and tie with a bow under the chin.

These dolls are fun at any season, and particularly suitable for decorating. If napkins with a good deal of red in the decorations are used they give a delightful color tone to the doll. The dolls cost so little that they make convenient favors for a luncheon.

The Hole in the Doughnut.

There is a man in Pennsylvania who peddles doughnuts to the school children. His wife makes the doughnuts and he sells them, and the money he gets they both spend for flour and eggs and the other things to make more doughnuts with. If they did anything for that they would have to stop baking and selling doughnuts, and then they would not be any more money, and it would be a fine state of affairs, indeed.

Well, the man thought that maybe he was not getting quite so much money for his doughnuts as he might get. He tried to figure out how he could get more, but the figuring was not easy. He had been used to selling doughnuts for one cent apiece. He might raise the price to two cents, but if he did he would not sell half so many. He could not raise it to three cents for two doughnuts, because one child would not want two doughnuts all at once instead of one doughnut and some candy, and if three children chipped in one cent each there would be sure to be trouble and fighting about dividing two doughnuts among three children.

The man saw that he could not raise the price, but it occurred to him that he might lower the doughnuts—that is, he might make them smaller. He puzzled over that a bit, and then he stopped looking at the doughnut and looked at the hole. He saw that there was not any doughnut where the hole was, and so he saw further that if the hole were larger the doughnut would be smaller. He told his wife about it and showed her the difference between the eating part of a doughnut and the hole, and after a while she agreed with him and promised that she would make the holes larger.

Now that would have been all right if the man and his wife had thought a little more. The doughnuts with the larger holes sold much better than the old kind, and both the man and his wife were happy until they came to count up the money and doughnuts. Then they found that the usual amount of dough had not made the usual number of doughnuts, notwithstanding the larger holes that they had made in the doughnuts. They sat down and thought and thought, and then all at once they both saw a great light. They had made the holes larger, they saw, but since the holes were larger there was more dough required to go around the holes, and so the doughnuts were really larger than ever. The man and his wife were quite downcast, but they went to work again and made and sold doughnuts again of the old fashioned size, and now they are looking for some other way of getting more money out of the school children.

Roads to Rome.

All roads lead to Rome, you may have heard people say, and you may have wondered why they should say that when, of course, all roads do not lead to Rome. It is a saying that is left over from a time when it was true. There were no roads—or none to speak of—that did not lead to Rome.

The Romans were a military people, you know, and they sometimes had to move large armies. There were no railroad trains in the time of the Roman empire, and armies had to walk, though some of the officers could ride on horseback or in chariots such as you see in the circus. But even a walking army must have some road to walk on, and so great highways were built from Rome across what are now Italy, France and England. Near Rome the tourists usually take the time for a visit to the Appian way or the Claudian way, which are two of the old roads in the best repair. They are not in good repair, at that, for they were built of great flag stones, which have sunk in and cracked in the centuries that have passed since the grandeur of the empire, and now it is difficult to make one's way except where the slabs have been straightened. The Romans, intelligent as they were, did not discover the secret of roadmaking, which is merely keeping water away from the foundation. Still, the long highways of the Romans, though the longest were not paved like those near the capital city, served their purpose, and the courses of them may still be followed across Europe.

An Adopted Child.

A mother dog that lives in New York saw one of her puppies killed. Then she was as sad as a mother can be, and she went back to her other puppies and mourned. Then pretty soon she went to call on her old friend the cat. The dog and the cat had been friends for years and they had never had a misunderstanding. They were better friends than ever just at this time, because the dog had her puppies and the cat had even more kittens to look after. The cat had more kittens than she could attend to properly, and the dog was short by one puppy. So it was the most natural thing in the world that when the dog had finished telling the cat all her troubles she should pick up one of the extra kittens and take it home with her in place of the puppy that had been killed. Now there are two happy families in New York.